

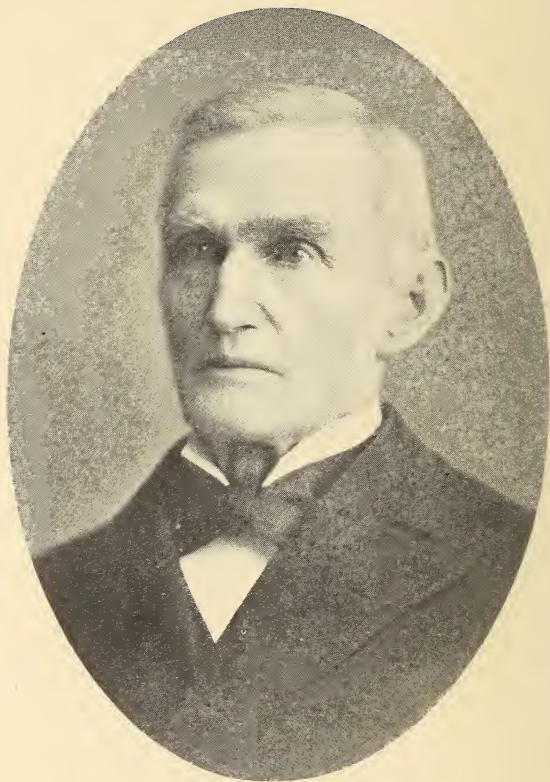


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Wm. K. Hester

THE LIFE OF FAITH

AND

OTHER SERMONS

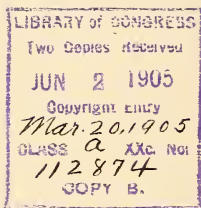
By

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GREETING.

The publication of these sermons is inspired with the hope that they may be the means of accomplishing some good. After trying to preach the Gospel for over fifty years, there is still the earnest desire to bear some humble part in extending the knowledge of the story of the cross. To all who have waited upon my ministry in other days, and to the stranger as well, hearty greetings are hereby extended, accompanied with the prayer that this presentation of the simple truths of the Gospel may awaken the thought, strengthen the faith, and increase the joy of him who readeth.

WM. MCK. HESTER.

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I.

THE LIFE OF FAITH.

“And the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.”—GAL. II, 20.

LIFE is something that enters into our every thought and word. Its manifestations are so abundant that we constantly think about it and talk about it. There is life everywhere. There is life above us and life beneath us. There is life on the right hand and life on the left hand. There is life without us and life within us. If we go down into the ocean's depths and pluck the moss from the unfathomed rock we will find that it has life in it; as well have the blades of grass that spring up along our pathway and the shrubs and trees that grow on the hills around us. If we take the drop of water and bring it before the magnifying-glass we will find that the tiny insect that is in it, invisible to the natural eye, has life in it; so also have the reptiles that creep in the dust, the birds that fly in the air, and the beasts that roam over the earth. Life also is a term that is figuratively used

to denote the various avocations of men in the world. We speak of the work of the farmer as the farmer's life, the employment of the mechanic as the mechanic's life, the business of the merchant, the practice of the physician, the pleadings of the attorney, as the life they live. But the apostle in the text brings to our view a life that is both real and earnest, a life that is most exalted and most wonderful. It is the life that is begotten in the soul of man by the Spirit of God; it is that principle which is imparted to man's heart when he becomes a child of God; it is salvation from the guilt and dominion of sin wrought by Divine grace; it is God living in man and man living in God; it is "the life of faith in the Son of God, who loved us and gave Himself for us."

The apostle in this Epistle is correcting a grievous error that was threatening injury to the Churches of Galatia. Certain teachers had come that way who were preaching doctrines that were contrary to the simplicity and purity of the Gospel. They claimed that the performance of the works of the law was the condition of salvation; that only by observing Mosaic ordinances and Jewish ceremonies could man be justified; that only by obedience to the law could the sinner obtain pardon and the believer retain the Divine approval. Paul points out the erroneous nature of such teachings. He reminds the Galatians of the fact that they had been converted from lives of sinfulness, not because they performed the ceremonies of the law,

but because they repented of sin and believed on the Lord Jesus Christ. He tells them that they had experienced this glorious salvation, not on account of works done, but because of the exercise of faith; and he shows them that this life in their hearts, which was begun by faith, was to be continued by faith. As his custom often was in his sermons and in his letters, he refers for illustration to his own religious experience. He testifies that he obtained pardon for sin by exercising faith in Jesus. This new life was begotten in his soul when he accepted Christ as his Savior by faith. As he had begun to live this life by faith, so he continued to realize its joyful presence by continuing to exercise faith. And with tender emphasis he declares to them, "The life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me."

These words are used by Paul, not merely as a preacher of the Gospel nor as a Divinely appointed teacher of holy things, nor exclusively as the great apostle to the Gentiles, but as a sinner saved. Therefore, others who have experienced this great salvation may bear the same joyful testimony. You and I, if sinners saved by grace, if rejoicing in the same glorious assurance, may, with Paul, declare, the one to the other, and to all the world around, "The life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me."

I. THESE WORDS CLEARLY TEACH that Christ is the source and that faith is the condition of spiritual life. "I live by faith in the Son of God."

The apostle speaks of the Christian as living a twofold life. The one is the life of the flesh, and the other is the life of faith. The one is the physical or animal life, the other is the moral or spiritual life. The spiritual life is that which is begotten in the believing heart by the grace of God. It is the resurrection of the soul from the death of sin to the life of righteousness. It is while living in the flesh to be so united to Christ that while the material man, or the life of the flesh, draws all its supplies of strength from material sources, the spiritual man, or the life of faith, is quickened, sustained, and made to grow by the stream of Divine grace that flows from the heart of a loving Savior.

The Savior illustrates this truth in His conversation with His disciples. He said to them, "I am the vine, ye are the branches." He emphasized the necessity of the constant connection of the branch with the vine that the branch might live and bear fruit. We may go to the vineyard to-day, and if with a knife we sever the branch from the vine we know it will die. Only so long as the branch is united to the vine will it live. While this connection remains undisturbed, nourishment flowing up from the soil through the vine into the branches will cause them to live and grow and bear fruit,—the Christian as the branch is united to Christ, the

vine, by faith. He lives while he continues to trust in Christ; he dies when faith ceases. From the warm and loving heart of Jesus flows the current of spiritual life to the believing soul and enables him to bring forth a harvest of spiritual fruit. Unwavering, undying faith is necessary that there may be realized the heart-throbs of spiritual life. The Christian ever lives by "looking to Jesus."

II. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE LIFE OF FAITH.

We speak of the life we live in the flesh as distinct from the life of the flesh. What distinguishing marks does it bear? The Christian tells of his conversion, of being made a new creature, of having experienced salvation. But what are the characteristics of this new life? How is he made certain that it is something different from the life of the flesh? What is conversion? What is it to be made a new creature in Christ Jesus? What are the characteristics of this life?

I. It is a mysterious life. At the very threshold of a life of faith there is mystery. How a soul is converted; how the heart is changed and all things made new; how Divine grace so operates upon man's moral nature as to awaken him from spiritual death to spiritual life, is full of mystery. How is there begotten in man's soul, that was under condemnation and conscious guilt, a blessed assurance of pardon and a spirit of peace and joy? About this whole work of which the Christian testifies there is mystery. The life of faith is shrouded in mystery.

Jesus clearly refers to this mysterious nature of the work of salvation in His conversation with Nicodemus. In speaking of the new birth, He says: "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh or whither it goeth; even so is every one that is born of the Spirit." You may be sensible of the blowing of the wind, but you can not tell where it was born or when it will die. There is mystery about every passing breeze as well as in the sweeping blasts of the destructive tornado. So also is there mystery about the work of man's salvation.

You may, however, say that if there is mystery about the life of faith you have no desire to embrace it. You may demand a religion that is plain and that can be easily understood, a godliness that has no mystery in it. Some go so far as to reject Christianity entirely because they can not fully understand the work of a soul's salvation. Unable to solve the mystery about it, they deny its reality, and rejecting the truths of the Gospel, they turn to the by-paths of skepticism. They adopt as their rule of action to accept as true and real what they can comprehend, and to reject as untrue what they can not demonstrate by reason or fully understand. In their investigation of religious truth they meet with the mystery of a life of faith. Being unable to solve that mystery by their reasoning powers, being unable to understand how God's Spirit can so operate upon man's spirit that he may live a new life, they discard the Christian religion as unreal and pro-

nounce it simply a delusion. But we may well ask, Why adopt a different rule in the investigation of religious truth from that observed in the study of all other truth? Why do they not act in reference to the reality of a life of faith as they do in regard to manifestations of all life? Why reject the life of faith because it is full of mystery? All life is mysterious. Wherever you meet with life you find it shrouded in mystery. You discover in it that which reason can not explain or the human mind comprehend. The blade of grass that grows beneath your feet has life in it. But who can explain all about that life? You may go to the wisest of philosophers and ask them to solve the problem of life in a simple blade of grass, and they will acknowledge that they are unable to do it. They can not tell how the work of life goes on in the grass, how it gathers nourishment from the soil, the sunshine, and the showers, and grows thereby; nor how it generates seed peculiarly its own. There is mystery about it, and yet that its life is a reality is accepted by all as a fact and without any disputation. Take these bodies of ours. We are conscious of the life that is in them, the life of the flesh; but who can comprehend that life? Who can explain how the mind operates upon the material organs and controls the physical powers? Who can tell how by the exercise of the will we can raise the hand or lower it, or move the feet, or perform the various acts of life? Who can unfold the wonders of memory, of thought, and sensation? Who can

tell how the heartbeat is kept up, regularly sending the life-blood to all parts of the body? The "life of the flesh" is full of mystery. Indeed, all life is mysterious, whether it be of a spire of grass, or of the bud of a tree, or of bird or beast. And yet no one will deny the reality of life in all things around simply because he can not fathom its wondrous mystery. No more should he deny the reality of the life of faith. It is true that it is shrouded in mystery, but this fact affords no reason to doubt its reality or to reject it as untrue. Its very mysterious nature only the more commends it to us as supernatural and Divine.

2. The life of faith is of God. God Himself is its author. The conversion of a soul is not the result of human reason. The work of salvation is not wrought upon man's moral nature by intellectual forces. It is the result of the presence and operation of the Divine Spirit. A religion that has life in it must be of God; for all life is of God.

Man with all his inventive genius can not originate life. His greatest skill will fail to impart life to any object. The little boy, with a penknife and a piece of pine, can, at his leisure, whittle out that which has the shape of a tree. He may ingeniously carve its body and branches and paint its leaves. He may then take it to his mother and proudly say, "Ma, this is a tree; I made it." But he can not endow it with life. The mechanic or sculptor may go to the wood or the quarry, and carve from tree or stone that which has the form of a man; he may

paint its cheeks and color its eyes; he may mold to nature its mouth and nose and ears so that it will perfectly resemble a human being; but with all his artistic skill, he can not give it life. It may bear all the outward form of a man, yet it is nothing but a lifeless automaton. God alone is the author of life. He only can give life to grass or tree or animal. In order that man may have spiritual life God must impart that life to his soul. You may try in your religious zeal by your own power to make a Christian of your neighbor, to bring him to experience spiritual life, but you will fail. You may lead him to the Church and enable him to become familiar with the forms of religious service; you may teach him to sing psalms and hymns of praise; you may have him to say long prayers; you may write his name upon the roll as a Church member. You may go farther than that, you may take him to the river and baptize him by immersion, or bring him to the church and baptize him by affusion. You may do more than that, you may write upon his skirts, "This is a Christian," or put a placard printed in large letters on his back or on his forehead, so that all who see him may read, "This is a Christian." But after you have done all this, if the Divine Spirit does not touch his heart, if the voice of a loving Savior does not fall upon his ear and awaken him from the death of sin, he will still be without life; he will merely remain a spiritual automaton, having the form, but without the power of salvation. God alone can lift the burden of guilt from man's heart,

roll back the dark clouds of condemnation and impart peace and joy and life to man's heart.

3. The life of faith is experimental. He who is saved knows it. He is conscious of pardon for sin and acceptance with God. Some may deny the experimental nature of conversion. Others may fear to claim the assurance given of pardon and be unwilling to bear testimony to the fact of their salvation. They may consider the claim of positive knowledge that their sins are forgiven as presumptuous, and only express the hope that they are adopted into the family of God. But all these doubts and fears are without good foundation. The blessed assurance is afforded in the fact that the life of faith is a conscious life. The apostle clearly teaches this truth in the text. He speaks of the life which he is living in the flesh as a matter of personal knowledge. Consciousness is the test he recognizes as proof of the fact, and consciousness is the most conclusive, the most reliable of all testimony. Conclusions drawn from consciousness are definite and certain. The testimony of men of well-known veracity may be received without questioning their word, yet even their statements are not more convincing than evidence drawn from consciousness. Let a man be conscious of pain, or grief, or joy, and no argument can cast the shadow of a doubt upon his mind in regard to his real condition. You are conscious that you can see and hear. The most persistent course of reasoning would fail to make you believe that you were blind or deaf. You

are conscious of being alive; who could convince you that you were only a lifeless corpse, or who could arouse in your mind even a doubt as to the fact? The Christian is conscious of living "the life of faith." He knows that, whereas he was once blind, now he can see; whereas he was once spiritually dead, he is now spiritually alive. He may not be able to explain all about the work of his salvation, but he is conscious of the peace and joy that now live in his heart. I can not tell how it was, many years ago, in boyhood's early days, how it was that after earnest pleading at the mercy-seat the burden of guilt was lifted from my heart; how it was that the darkness was turned to light, and sorrow was changed to joy; how it was that God's Spirit imparted to my spirit the glad assurance of sins forgiven; but of the glorious fact I was perfectly conscious. Through the many passing years since that hour that blessed consciousness has remained, and to-day I can gladly bear the testimony that, "The life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me."

4. The life of faith is satisfying. It meets the wants and satisfies the longings of man's soul.

The body has its appetites and its wants. Being material itself, its wants must be supplied with material food and material drink. But the soul is a spirit; its wants are therefore spiritual, and can only be satisfied with spiritual food and spiritual drink. Earthly and material things must neces-

sarily fail to meet its most earnest longings. They who wholly depend for happiness upon earthly pleasures, or earthly wealth, or earthly honors, can never be fully satisfied. We find this fact clearly proven by facts in real life around us. Take a homely illustration. That young man full of energy and ambition starts out in life as a farmer. He is a poor young man, but he is industrious and economical. He buys a forty-acre tract of land on credit for a home. He imagines that when he has made enough money to pay for that land and has well improved it, he will be happy and contented. He will have a small farm, it is true, but it will be his own property. He works hard, he economizes closely, and by and by pays the purchase price. It is now his land and not encumbered with debt. He has a clear title to the forty acres and points with pride to the comfortable improvements he has put upon it and the good harvests its fields produce. I go to him and ask him, "Are you happy now, are you fully satisfied? You have been successful in accomplishing your plans, you have a nice little home of your own, are you fully satisfied?" He very candidly answers: "Well, I have accomplished the work I set out to do. I own a very nice farm, but it is not large enough. I need more land. Right by the side of my farm lies a hundred-and-twenty-acre tract of land. I think I will buy that also. It will give me a farm of one hundred and sixty acres, and I think I will then be satisfied." He buys the land on credit; he works a little harder; he econo-

mizes more closely; and after awhile he is able to pay for it. I go to him and ask: "Are you now satisfied? You have as large a farm as one man can well cultivate. It brings you in bountiful harvests. Certainly you are now happy and fully satisfied." With a smile upon his countenance and a shake of the head, he replies: "No, not quite. I thought I would not want any more land, but just adjoining my farm is another hundred-and-sixty-acre tract of very rich land; it must be sold by its owner and can be bought at a bargain. I would like to have it." He makes the purchase. He works still harder, economizes more closely, becomes more penurious; he goes on adding farm to farm until he becomes a large landowner. His broad acres spread out over the hills and valleys around him, and his barns are filled with the bountiful harvests gathered from his well-cultivated fields. The world counts him rich, and his neighbors imagine that he must be contented and very happy. I go to him when his hair is getting gray, when his cheeks are deeply furrowed by time and care, when his limbs are beginning to tremble with age and hard toil, and say to him: "My dear friend, are you not satisfied yet? Is not your cup of happiness full? You own all the land around you; your fields bring forth bountifully; your barns are well filled; are you not fully satisfied?" His lips quiver, a tear starts from his eye, and he sadly answers: "No, I am not satisfied yet. Just beyond the last farm I bought is a deep dark valley. Through it flows the cold stream of death. I must

soon cross that stream, and I am not prepared." All of his earthly gains have failed to meet his spiritual wants or satisfy the longings of his immortal soul. Nor can they make him happy. Not until he climbs the hill of Calvary, not until he humbly bows at the foot of the cross, not until he feels the blood of cleansing applied to his heart, will his spiritual wants be met. When the burden of guilt is lifted from his heart, when he is made conscious of the pardon of sin and adoption into the family of God; when new life is imparted to his soul, then only will he be satisfied; then, living by faith in the Son of God, he will be able joyfully to sing,

"Now rest, my long divided heart,
Fixed on this blissful center rest,
Nor ever from thy Lord depart,
With Him of every good possessed."

5. The life of faith is comforting. The religion of the Lord Jesus Christ is a solace in days of sorrow, an inspiration of joy when all else fails. There are times when we grow weary of worldly pleasures, when abundance of wealth becomes a burden, when earthly honors prove a vexation and the heart longs for something better than the world can afford. When health begins to fail, when clouds of adversity arise, when the ties that bind loved ones together are broken, when the shadow of death falls across the threshold, then the fountain of earthly joy dries up, then the heart rent with grief is ready to sink in despair. It is then that they who live this life of faith are enabled to walk in the light and in-

dulge in the spirit of rejoicing. The promises of the Gospel afford comfort here, and the life of faith spans with a rainbow of hope the darkest of earth's storm clouds. A striking proof of this is given in the case of one of God's faithful children. A pious woman, a member of the Church, was stricken with an affliction for which no remedy could be found. Her physician and friends gave up all hope of her restoration to health. For months she had been growing weaker and weaker, and she awaited patiently the coming of the final summons. When visiting her in her affliction I was deeply impressed with the sad surroundings. What words of comfort could be found to dispel the gloom or relieve the sadness of the scene? There were no grounds on which to build a hope of recovery. I could only repeat the promise of freedom from pain and suffering, and of happiness in the life to come. The remainder of this life gave assurance only of blighted hopes, of racking pains, and of approaching death. While trying to direct her thoughts to the home above as the only solace that could be given, she drew from under her pillow her well-worn Bible and triumphantly replied: "O, this blessed Book is full of precious promises, promises of the life that now is as well as of that which is to come; and these promises are all mine. Jesus here speaks to me words of comfort for every day of suffering, for every hour of trouble, and He not only gives me these promises in the Bible, but He sends the Holy Comforter even into my room,

and whenever the Comforter comes He brings heaven with Him." Then with her feeble voice she sweetly sang:

"I am happy here, and I hope to be there;
I'm happy on my journey home."

The shadow of death on a dark stormy night fell across the threshold of my own humble home. The companion of my youth and of my mature manhood was suddenly taken away. My bosom was rent with grief, and it was very hard to say, "Thy will be done." With bowed head and tearful eyes I followed her cold remains to the grave. The coffin was lowered into the vault and every clod of earth that was cast upon its lid seemed to fall upon my aching heart. But while standing by that new-made grave I heard by faith a voice tenderly saying, "I am the resurrection and the life;" "Because I live ye shall live also." Turning from that scene of death, lifting my tearful eyes to heaven, hope revived and I was enabled gladly to say: "The life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God. I shall see my loved ones again in that better land where there is no death."

6. Finally, the life of faith is eternal. It ends not with the day dreams and night visions of this world. The life of the flesh will fail before long. The brightest eye will grow dim, the rosiest cheek will fade, the most active limbs will be palsied. This life which we so fondly cherish will soon close. All the fondest ties here will soon be broken. All the pleasures of time will soon cease. But the life of

faith will still endure. In youth it inspires hope; in mature life it affords real happiness; in old age it imparts new strength and new joys. It sheds light about the chamber of sickness, it gives comfort to aching hearts; it crowns the dying pilgrim with complete triumph. It never ends. It is said that the great statesman of Massachusetts, at the close of life, in the delirium of his last moments, to those who stood around his couch and wiped the death-sweat from his brow, slowly but distinctly uttered the words, "I—still—live." The Christian pilgrim in his last conflict, not in the delirium of death's struggle, but in his right mind, and in the flush of complete victory, to all who weep at his bedside, will be able to say, "I still live." As he goes down into the valley and crosses the cold stream he can shout back, "I still live." As he places his feet upon the evergreen shore and shakes from his skirts the dewdrops of death, he can repeat, "I still live." And as he walks the golden streets of the New Jerusalem, as he surveys the bright fields of Paradise, as he greets again the loved ones gone on before, and joins the ranks of the blood-washed throng, he can triumphantly shout, "I still live." Throughout the endless ages the chorus of his eternal song will be, "I still live." The life of faith begun here amid sorrows and joys, amid temptations and triumphs, will continue forever. Like a bending rainbow of light it will gild every earthly cloud, afford comfort in every hour of sorrow, and give an abundant entrance into the kingdom of God.

II.

ALL THINGS ARE YOURS.

"All things are yours."—I COR. III, 21.

THE Bible is full of promises to the children of God. These promises have reference both to the life which now is and to that which is to come. They are abundant, rich, and full. So abundant are they that they can not be numbered; so rich are they that they excite our wonder; so full are they that they stagger our belief in their fulfillment. Take, for instance, the promise in regard to the things of this life: "All things work together for good to them that love and serve God." Though this is the language of an inspired apostle, how often do we doubt the correctness of his word! As we look back over the past, we imagine that we can enumerate many things that were not for our good. When we survey our present surroundings how many "things" there are that seem to us possible to be changed for our good! We often entertain the thought that had we the creation of our own environments, had we the control of the events of our lives, we could make many of them much more conducive to our own good, much more efficient in promoting our own happiness. Then, take that other

promise: "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal." How ready is unbelief to ask, "How can afflictions in time be for our good in eternity? How can the pains of the body here increase the joys of the soul there? How can the sufferings, the disappointments, and the separations of this life enhance the glory of the life to come?" And, instead of meetings life's battles bravely and enduring its burdens and sorrows joyfully, we often murmur and complain of the lot that is ours. Take, again, the rich promise implied in the text, "All things are yours!" all things are helpful in the Divine life. "How can this be?" the doubting heart replies; and at once it is ready to reject the blessed assurance given. Indeed, the more abundant the promises, the richer and fuller that they may be, the more ready is the human heart to shrink back into the fog of unbelief, and willingly entertain doubts of their fulfillment. It is far better and more reasonable for us with faith to accept them in all their richness, and zealously perform all the conditions of their fulfillment; far better is it, without doubting, to receive them as Divine truth, as the legacy left us by the Spirit of God Himself.

Paul does not claim for God's children, in the words of the text, the right of possession of all prop-

erty. He does not set up a title-deed to all the broad acres of earth, or refer to the supreme control of its gold and silver, or its flocks and herds. He is speaking of that which is of more importance to the Christian than ownership of lands or mines of precious metals, or positions of earthly honor. And yet, if permitted to turn aside for a moment from the important theme upon which he dwells, it would be safe to predict the coming of the time when even the material things of this world will belong to the children of God. The inspired prophet distinctly declares, "The saints shall inherit the earth." The good time is coming when the fertile fields of earth, the productive mines of gold and silver, the high offices of honor and trust, and "the cattle upon a thousand hills" shall belong to the saints of God; when this earth shall be under their sway, and "all things" shall be theirs. But the apostle is here presenting a richer thought. He is teaching a more important lesson. "All things are yours," he asserts in reference to helps in the Divine life. All things are yours as means of grace to assist in serving God; all things are yours to enable you to overcome the world and to make heaven your eternal home.

He reproves the partisan spirit which was manifested in the Church at Corinth. Divisions and dissensions were springing up there that threatened great harm to the cause of Christ in that city. Discussions as to the personal superiority of the different apostles had become prevalent. Diverse opinions were held as to who should be chosen to

administer there the truths of the Gospel. They were divided as to who should be their teacher in holy things, as to who should be the chief apostle of their Church. There was one party for Paul, another for Peter, and still another for Apollos. One party insisted that Paul, the great apostle to the Gentiles, who planted the Church at Corinth and had been instrumental in the conversion of its members, should be chosen; and none but Paul would do. Another party had objections to Paul. He was too logical, they said, in his sermons, too doctrinal in his teaching, and they contended that they must have the bold, the earnest, the enthusiastic Peter; and none but Peter would do. Others discarded both Paul and Peter, and demanded the selection of the fervent, the eloquent Apollos as their preacher; and none but Apollos would do. The contention grew warm, angry passions were engendered, and the peace of the Church was greatly disturbed. Other Churches, since the days of the apostles, have suffered from a like cause. But Paul writes to the Corinthians reproving this spirit of partisanship. He tells them that there is no occasion for such contention. For says he, "All things are yours." Paul is yours, and Cephas is yours, and Apollos is yours; all of the apostles are yours, to teach you the way of life and to help you on to God. Every preacher of the Gospel, every ordinance of the Church, every means of grace, is yours to advance you in the Divine life. And then, going still farther, he tells them that not only all the

agencies in the Church are theirs as helps, but all things outside as well,—things present and things to come, life and death; all are theirs, to help them to love and serve God, to enable them to make their calling and election sure.

I. THE APOSTLE IN TEACHING THIS LESSON lays down impliedly the foundation principle—that growth or increase is the law of spiritual life.

“All things are yours” to help you grow spiritually. Continual advancement in the Divine life is necessary to the full development of Christian character. Some look upon the hour of conversion as the happiest of all hours in their religious experience; that then the light shone brightest; that then they attained to the acme of their salvation. Others depend for spiritual safety upon the remembrance of past blessings, and argue their assurance of a home in heaven from the fact of a clear and joyful experience in former days. Still others imagine that the high attainments that they have already made are all that are possible for them; that there is no more land for them to possess. But while the fact of conversion should be the cause of continual gratitude, and its joys be treasured up in most delightful memories; while the experience of Pentecostal seasons may have been rich and glorious, and the eye of faith has been enabled to survey from Pisgah’s heights the whole of the Promised Land, yet this is not enough. The safety of the Christian requires that his spiritual growth be constant. His

experience is to be ever deeper and richer. His advancement in the Divine life is to be a daily attainment. It is his duty to go forward, to grow stronger and stronger. If there is not continual progress in the spiritual life, sin lieth at the door.

That growth is the law of spiritual life we may infer from analogy. The fact is clearly indicated in the works of nature. On all the vegetable world the law of growth or increase is found operating. When the vegetable, the vine, or the tree ceases to grow, it begins to die. Continued growth there is the attribute of continued life. Where the fact of growth is wanting the seeds of death may be found. This, also, is the law of man's physical nature. The child does not remain a child in stature. The body is expected to increase in size and strength daily. A little boy when asked the question, "Are you a man?" answered very promptly, "No, sir; but I expect to grow to be a man." He simply recognized the law of growth that belonged to his physical powers. The same law is stamped upon man's mental being. The intellectual faculties naturally increase in strength. The mind is capable of continually acquiring knowledge. Its natural bent is to know more and more. The old proverb may be here quoted as teaching differently that "man is twice a child; first, when he is a babe in his mother's arms; again, when old age comes upon him, he becomes a child again." It is true there may be some who verify this proverb, and are children when young and children when old. Indeed, some people

may never be anything else but children. But this is not the law of man's being. He was evidently made to grow, to increase in knowledge, to gain in intellectual power, to be a learner of truth as long as this life lasts. And if permitted to theorize here, I would say it is my belief that increase of knowledge is not only the law of this life but also of the life to come. If we are so happy as to be admitted to the bliss of heaven, I believe we shall always be learning more, ever be increasing in knowledge. As we walk among the bowers of Eden and bask in the sunlight of that eternal world, we shall know more of God, more of His blessed Son, more of immortality, and more of this wonderful universe which God's hand has formed. May we not infer, then, if it is the law of the vegetable that it must grow or else die; if to the human body must daily be added strength; if the mind should ever increase its stock of knowledge, that growth or increase is also the law of man's moral being; that his faith and his affections, that his hopes and his joys, that all that pertains to the Divine life in the soul should constantly grow stronger?

This law is clearly set forth in the Word of God. One apostle says, "Leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection." It is not designed that we should be satisfied with only an entrance upon the Christian pathway, be it ever so joyful. Though the morning light may be brilliant, we are still to look for the exceeding brightness of the midday sun. It is our privilege

and our duty to explore wider fields of religious knowledge, and have a deeper and richer experience of Divine things. Another apostle says, "Add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge temperance, to temperance patience, to patience experience, to experience godliness, to godliness charity, to charity brotherly kindness; give diligence to make your calling and election sure." The law of the Divine life is one of addition. We are to add grace to grace, and virtue to virtue, as long as life lasts. Then there comes, in no uncertain sound, from the throne of God itself, to every child of God, the supreme command, "Grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."

But to this law of growth so clearly laid down, objections may arise. You may be ready to say, "I do not understand this. I can not reconcile the idea of continual increase with the duty of attaining unto Christian perfection. How can that which is perfect still grow? How can that which is still growing be perfect? "These duties," you may say, "are inconsistent the one with the other." In answering this objection, much depends upon the interpretation given of the term Christian perfection. Whatever others may suppose this to be, the Scriptures evidently teach that it is to love God with the whole heart, soul, mind, and strength. When one has come in his religious life to love God with his whole heart, he is a perfect Christian. But you ask, "How can one who loves God perfectly, with his whole

heart, grow spiritually or love Him any more?" In answer take a simple illustration. Twenty years ago you may have passed a certain spot on the way-side. On that spot grew a young and vigorous tree. Stopping then you examined that tree, noting carefully its body, its leaves, and its fruit. After a close examination, you may truly have said, this is a perfect tree. It is young, but it is perfect. Its body, its branches, its leaves, its fruit, are all perfect. To-day you pass by that same spot and look upon that same tree. You find, by examination, that its body, its branches, its leaf, and its fruit are still perfect. All through those twenty years it has been growing, but all the while it has remained a perfect tree. The only difference now, as to what it was then, is that it is larger, and now bears a much more abundant harvest of leaf and flower and fruit. So should it be with the Christian,—perfect yesterday, and perfect to-day, but always growing, and every day bearing a larger harvest of good works to the glory of God.

Still farther urging your objection, you may take a glass and pour water into it until it is full, and then say you can not pour in any more water. Now, you ask, if you love God with your whole heart how can you increase in that love? It is true that when you have filled the glass with water you can not pour in any more. If you tried to do so the water would run out over the brim. But I will tell you what you can do: you can take that goblet to the glass-blower, let him place it for awhile in the well-

heated furnace, then, when the glass is softened by the heat, he can, with one puff of his breath, enlarge the dimensions of the vessel so that it will hold much more than it did before. So may we do in the Divine life. Though we love God with the whole heart now, we may bring our hearts to the furnace of Divine love and let the Holy Spirit blow upon them and enlarge them. Then we can love God more and serve Him better. Every day the heart should experience this warming influence and realize this expanding power of the Spirit of God.

II. ALL THINGS ARE YOURS AS HELPS TO SPIRITUAL GROWTH.

The apostle, having laid down the foundation principle, now presents the precious assurance that all things may be a means of growth or increase in the spiritual life.

We are apt to take a different view of our surroundings. We often complain of things we meet with as hindrances to a life of devotion. We excuse a want of spiritual growth in ourselves and in others because of these hindrances. We charge the lack of religious advancement to human frailty, to the wickedness of the world, to physical suffering, or to mental trouble. We persuade ourselves to believe that we can not live a life wholly blameless, that we must wait till free from the body and the events of time before we can be ever growing and always sinless. But Paul, with just such human nature as we have, surrounded by the same world, contending with the

same enemies, from experience and from inspiration, utters the grand promise of the text, "All things are yours." He assures us that all things may be made a means of grace; all things can become helps to us in serving God.

A consideration of a few of these will make evident the aid they may afford us in a religious life.

The frailties of human nature may be helpful. The consciousness of personal weaknesses should increase our spiritual strength. The man who, after deep penitence, has experienced pardon for sin, who has obtained full evidence of acceptance with God, and who, because of the clearness and power of his conversion, rises up in the glow of his first joy and declares that he is now firmly established, that he has no fear of falling, that he can now overcome all enemies by his own power,—that man will in a short time be likely to utterly fail. He trusts alone in his own strength. But he who, after an equally clear and blessed assurance of his acceptance, still realizes his own weaknesses, and tries to walk, not in his own strength, but in the strength which grace supplies, who is ever "looking unto Jesus" and ever leaning upon His strong arm,—he will most surely stand. A consciousness of his own weakness and of his own ignorance will lead him to trust to the Strong for strength, and to look to the All-wise for wisdom. No man ever falls whose abiding trust is in Christ.

The wickedness of the world may be made a means of help spiritually by contrast. The acts of

evil-doers may have a tendency to chill the ardor of our devotion. The influence of the unrighteous may oftentimes lead hearts astray from Christ. This should not be so. Rather these things should make the Christian more faithful. I do not mean to say that I believe evil is necessary for the good of man or the glory of God, or to teach that sin is a blessing; but by contrasting sin with righteousness, the life of the wicked with the life of the good, the death of the ungodly with the death of the upright, we can find the strongest incentives to walk in the way of the righteous, to live the life of the godly. Sin is always ugly. There is nothing noble or beautiful in deeds of wickedness. Profanity, anger, licentiousness, as well as drunkenness and theft and murder, are degrading. But the works of the righteous and the acts of the good are always elevating. They recommend themselves to the approving consciences of all men. There is a beauty about them that charms the hearts and minds of those who witness them. They strongly speak against that which is wrong and in favor of that which is right. This fact is often shown in real life. Take one instance. In a certain neighborhood lived a family—a father, mother, and several sons. The father, when sober, was kind, industrious, and loving. But unfortunately he was addicted to strong drink. He never went to an election, to the post-office, or other public places, without becoming intoxicated, and when he returned home he brought trouble and sorrow to all his household. What was remarkable about

this family was, that not one of his sons would touch the accursed thing. Here was the influence of the father in favor of drunkenness, but his sons steadily avoided the intoxicating bowl. Why was this? The boys could give the answer. "We have a father," said they, "who is a good man and loving father when sober, but when under the influence of drink he is cruel and brutal. By his intemperate habits he is wasting his property, he is causing his children to go in rags, and is breaking our mother's heart. We have seen the evil of intoxication, we have felt the many sharp pangs that our father's drunkenness has produced, and have, therefore, set our faces firmly against the evil, and sworn in our hearts to lead lives of sobriety." By contrasting a life of sobriety with a life of drunkenness they were saved from the ruinous influence of their father's example.

Then, how striking the contrast between the closing scenes in the life of the good and the evil! How impressive the lesson then imparted! I once stood by the couch of a dying Atheist. He had discarded the Bible, rejected Christ as a Savior, and denied God. In his social relations he was kind and obliging, but inveterate in his hatred of Christianity. His death scene was without a ray of hope. In his last hour he spurned from his presence all mention of a loving Savior. With groans that were heart-rending, with billows of agony rolling over his soul that were terrible, with fearful struggles of mind and body in the last conflict, he passed away. O,

how sad, how rayless that scene! An immortal soul going into outer darkness! But from that death-bed, over which fell such a dark cloud, turn to the couch where the Christian pilgrim breathes his last:

“The chamber where the good man meets his fate,
Is privileged beyond the common walks of men,—
Quite on the verge of heaven.”

There may be weeping there; burning tears may be falling from the eyes of loved ones as they wipe the death-sweat from his brow; they may be overwhelmed with grief, but a smile lights up his face, his triumph is complete. His hands and his feet may be cold; the sight of his eye may be growing dim, the beatings of his pulse more feeble; but his last words, though in a whisper, tell of a glorious victory:

“If this be death, I soon shall be
From every pain and sorrow free;
I shall the King of glory see,—
All is well, all is well.”

And whose heart would not gladly say, while contrasting two such death scenes, “Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his?”

Even the temptations and trials encountered on life's pathway are yours to help in gaining spiritual strength. God does not tempt any of His children to commit sin. He only permits temptation to come, that, by resisting it, they may gain greater strength

for His service. The large oak that grows upon yonder hill is stronger in all its parts to-day because of the storms of a hundred winters that have beat upon it, than it would have been had it grown where no storms blow. The blasts of the passing wind have made its roots take deeper and firmer hold upon the earth, and added vigor and strength to its body and branches. See that mother who bears in her arms her babe along the street. The colder the winds and the fiercer the blast, the more closely does the child nestle to her bosom. So with the Christian,—the gusts of temptation and the seasons of trial cause him to grasp more firmly the supplies of Divine grace; the more severe his conflicts may be, the more closely does he lean upon Christ, the more securely does he hide in the pierced side of his Redeemer.

Even the separations in life are for our good. Others may teach differently; others may find in these sorrows no cause for increase of Christian confidence and Christian hope; but God's Word and the heart's experience attest the fact. Many years ago, while young in my religious life, I thought much of heaven. It then appeared to me as a land of light and joy, a place free from sorrow and full of bliss; and I said in my heart, that happy land shall be my eternal home. But heaven then seemed far away; beyond this life, beyond the clouds, beyond the stars; and I could only see it in the dim distance with the eye of faith. To-day heaven does not seem so far away. Every day it has been com-

ing nearer. Friends on the right hand and on the left have departed for that goodly place. Class-mates, one after another, have entered there. Loved ones have tenderly bade me good-bye, and gone on before; and every one that has gone has brought heaven nearer to me. To-day heaven does not seem very far away. Only a thin veil hides its glories from my view. Erelong that veil will be rent, and I shall see the blessed ones face to face, and I shall know as I am known. Earthly separations are only weaning us from the transitory things of time, and binding us more closely to our home in heaven.

Finally, death is yours. It will be a release from all the cares and anxieties of life, from all its toil and pain. It will put an end to sighing, grief, and flowing tears. It will be the breaking of the shell in which the redeemed soul is held here, and the opening to its enraptured vision of the unspeakable glories of immortality and eternal life.

Then, Christian pilgrim, why falter and complain? All things are yours,—things present and things to come, life and death,—all are yours, to help you on to God. Every tear as well as every smile, every shadow as well as every sunbeam, every trial as well as every joy,—all are yours. Cast away all fear, brush off every tear, hush every murmuring sigh, spread thy banner to the heavenly breeze! "All things are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's.

III.

A MIND TO WORK.

“So built we the wall; and all the wall was joined together unto the half thereof; for the people had a mind to work.”—NEH. IV, 6.

TWO THOUSAND years ago and more a company of Jews, under the leadership of Nehemiah, returned from captivity in Babylon to the land of their fathers. Nehemiah had received authority from the king of Persia to go to the land of Judea to build up the waste places and to restore order and beauty to its cities and villages. The remnant of the people who had been left in the land were in “great affliction and reproach;” the walls of Jerusalem were broken down, and its gates had been consumed by fire. When Nehemiah came near to its site he looked upon the ruins on every hand and was deeply grieved at the great desolation. He made a careful survey of the surroundings, and, notwithstanding the fearful obstacles before him, he returned to the band of Jews who had come with him and courageously addressed them: “Ye see the distress that we are in, how Jerusalem lieth waste and the gates thereof are burned with fire; come and let us build

up the wall of Jerusalem that we be no more a reproach."

The people were divided into various companies. Each band was appointed to its place about the wall for work. One band was selected to rebuild the Sheep Gate, another to rebuild the Fish Gate. One company was assigned to work at the Old Gate, and another at the Valley Gate. One band was to rebuild the Gate of the Fountain, another the Water Gate, and still another the Horse Gate. Thus the whole city was encircled with bands of workmen, earnestly and systematically engaged in removing the rubbish, in gathering the stones from the ruins and in restoring them to their places in the walls. The work was tedious, and the burdens were heavy. Besides the difficulties which they encountered because of the great desolation, they had to endure the active opposition of wily enemies that were about them. Sanballat, the Horonite; Tobiah, the Ammonite; and Geshem, the Arabian, threw all obstacles possible in their way, and scornfully derided them as they performed their work. "What is this thing that ye do?" they said. "Will ye rebel against the king?" And joining with treacherous brethren of the land, exclaimed: "What do these feeble Jews? Will they fortify themselves? Will they revive the stones out of the heaps of rubbish which are burned? Even that which they build, if a fox go up, he shall even break down their stone wall." They conspired together to come and fight against the bands of workmen and hinder the accomplish-

ment of the work. Undaunted, the faithful Nehemiah made prayer to God for help. He appointed watchmen to guard the workmen day and night. Half of the men wrought at the work, and the other half stood ready armed to defend against the approach of the enemy. The rubbish, though there was much of it, was removed, the walls gradually grew higher, the gates arose in beauty to their places, through the zeal and the untiring energy of the workmen, and the historian sums up the manner of work and their complete success in the words of the text: "So built we the wall; and all the wall was joined together unto the half thereof; for the people had a mind to work."

This interesting incident in the history of the Jews may well be used as a prophecy of things spiritual and things to come. Jerusalem in its desolate condition, strikingly typifies the world as ruined by sin; the Divine provisions for its rebuilding and restoration to beauty are typical of God's design and good pleasure to lift up the world to truth and righteousness. The agencies employed and the spirit of the workmen by which success was obtained prefigure the instrumentalities and controlling principle required for the conversion of men, the building up of the Church, and the fulfillment of the promise to give to the Son the "heathen for an inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for a possession."

Using the text as a type of things spiritual we learn that

I. THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH IS TO BRING THE WHOLE WORLD UNDER THE SAVING POWER OF THE GOSPEL.

The idea of completeness is clearly suggested: "The whole wall was joined together unto the half thereof." The mission of the Church is to labor for the salvation of not only a few here and there, but of all. The Church is appointed as the instrument of ushering in the good time when every nation, people, and tongue shall willingly bow to the scepter of our Immanuel, when every heart shall have experienced the saving power of the Gospel of Christ, and every tongue shall be attuned to the praise of a Triune God. This should form the grand object for which the Church should put forth every effort; nothing less than the bringing in of that good time when righteousness shall cover the earth should be deemed the scope and end of her great mission.

That such a day may dawn upon the world has been the inspiring hope of Christians of all ages. The same hope awakens fond anticipations in the heart of the Christian world to-day. Yet it must be admitted that doubts often arise as to the advent of such a good time. Many in their prophecies of the future declare that, as in the past so in all time to come, this world will be the arena of both sin and righteousness, that the inhabitants of the earth will never all be Christians in deed and in truth. That the present mixed state of things in the moral world will ever continue is argued from the comparatively little success achieved by Christianity since its

propagation among men. After the Gospel has been preached for nearly two thousand years, after the efforts of the Church have been put forth for the conversion of the world for so many centuries, how much of it still remains a spiritual waste; how little of the rubbish of sin has been removed; how few of the gates of the city have been set up! Again, a failure of complete success is argued from the apparent increase of wickedness in the world. Hearts of true Christians are shocked at the enormity of crimes committed, at the manifestation of debauchery on every hand. Evil doing holds high carnival in various parts of the world. Young men and maidens are enticed from the paths of uprightness by the siren voice of sin, and the silver locks of age do not always indicate purity of mind and holiness of life. Ofttimes even the godly are ready to exclaim, "O, the wickedness of the times! O, the degeneracy of the age!" And they are almost forced to conclude that the world is growing worse instead of better, and that the forces of evil are becoming more active and powerful. Again, doubts of success in the conversion of the whole world to the religion of the Gospel are created by the interpretation given by some to certain Scriptures. It is said our Savior Himself indicates that this mixed state of truth and error, of righteousness and sin, will continue in all the days to come. It is asked, Has Jesus not said, "As the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and

drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, and knew not till the flood came and took them all away; so also shall the coming of the Son of man be!" It is claimed by some that here we have a prophecy of the real condition of things at the coming of Christ at the last day; that then good and evil will exist together as they do to-day.

These doubts, however, are not well founded. These arguments against that good time coming may be conclusively answered. It may be truly affirmed that if Jesus in these words referred to the end of time and the day of His coming to judgment, He does not necessarily imply the existence of sin and evil doing. Eating and drinking are not always sinful; marrying and giving in marriage may take place without wrong doing. But Jesus is evidently speaking of another time than the end of the world. In close connection with this prophecy He says: "There shall be two in the field, the one shall be taken and the other left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill, the one shall be taken and the other left." But when Christ shall come the second time, to judge the world; when the angel shall declare that time shall be no longer, one will not be taken and the other left, but all shall be taken and none left. The words of Jesus are doubtless a prophecy of the day when God's judgments should fall upon Jerusalem and the Jewish nation for their gross wickedness. They can not be interpreted as a description of the moral condition of the world in

the last days. Again, the increase of wickedness among men may only be apparent. There may be more of it in some localities than formerly, while in general there will be found a healthy and glorious advance in morals and religion. Again, while in nearly two thousand years Christianity has not gained sway over all men, who will say that its cords have not been lengthening and its stakes growing stronger all along these centuries? All of these objections fail to furnish evidence of the impossibility or improbability of the complete conversion of the world to the Christian religion. There are good and substantial grounds on which to build our faith in the coming of this good time.

1. It is a prominent subject of prophecy. The prophets of Israel in no uncertain words predict the complete triumph of the cause of righteousness and truth. Go and hearken to the voice of Isaiah, that prince of Hebrew seers, and hear his exultant words as he forecasts the future. "And it shall come to pass in the last days," he says, "that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills, and all nations shall flow unto it. And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more." "In the last days" has no doubt reference to the days of the Gospel dispensation. When this grand prophecy is ful-

filled, universal love and purity, the requisite of universal peace, will prevail among mankind.

Go and sit down with Jeremiah, the weeping prophet, and as he looks away from the gross wickedness of his people, the cause of all his tears, mark how glorious the future appears to his inspired vision: "After these days I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor and his brother, saying, Know ye the Lord; for they shall all know Me from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord." When this universal knowledge of the Lord prevails there will be universal light and peace and joy among mankind.

Again, we have the sure words of prophecy telling of this good time coming: "They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea."

These prophecies have not yet been fulfilled. They still point to the future. They are promises of a day without clouds, of a time without evil, of a world without sin. They tell of that good time coming when peace shall prevail among nations and the love of God shall fill the hearts of men. These prophecies must be fulfilled, for they are God's words; and when they are fulfilled, then shall the "wall be joined together unto the half thereof;" then shall the Gospel light encircle the earth and

mankind rejoice in "the sunshine of the world's new spring."

2. It is a proper subject of prayer. Not every prayer that even Christians offer may be answered. Our petitions at a Throne of Grace, that they may be heard and answered, must be in accordance with the will of God. He, in His wisdom, will only grant to us that which He sees is best for us to have. The burden of the prayers of Christians in all ages of the world has been the salvation of mankind, the dawn of the day when God's love should fill every heart. Is such a prayer in accord with the will of our Heavenly Father? Let the great Teacher Himself give the answer. When Jesus taught His disciples how to pray, He presented this as one of the petitions they should offer: "Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done, as in heaven so in earth." If they were commanded by Him to offer this prayer, they certainly had reason to believe that the prayer would be answered. They were to pray for the coming of the time when the Father's will would be done in earth as it is done in heaven. His will is fully obeyed in heaven. When His will is done in earth as it is in heaven, every heart will be characterized by purity and love, every lip will be attuned to His praise. This has been the earnest prayer of God's people in all the centuries. It was fervently offered by the persecuted disciples. It rose above the flames from the martyrs as they burned at the stake. It has gone up to God from every land. It has burdened every Christian's heart. It has arisen

as sweet incense from every altar. And O, shall not the prayer of the good of all ages be heard in heaven? May not our faith look forward to the good time when the world shall be wholly redeemed from sin and brought back to God? He that taught His disciples to offer the prayer, "Thy will be done in earth as in heaven," will see that the answer is given in His own good time.

3. The Gospel possesses power sufficient to save the world. The prevalence of sin is so extensive, the wickedness of the human heart is so great, the world is so full of impurity and evil, that we may sometimes doubt whether even the Gospel has power enough to lift up fallen humanity. The thunders of Sinai seem at times insufficient to awaken the guilty. A larger bestowment of grace seems necessary to keep faithful those who have been saved. To bring the whole world to God appears impossible. The task is one of vast magnitude, far beyond the ability of man to accomplish. But there is a greater than human power to do the work. God's Spirit is abroad in the world, troubling the consciences of men. A Savior of Divine wisdom and compassion is provided, one that is Almighty to save. His all-powerful arm laid beneath a fallen world can lift it up to truth and righteousness. Then we may rejoice that a Gospel that can save one soul is equal to the salvation of every soul. Men are all alike in sinfulness and want. The darkness of one mind, the impurity of one heart, is like to that of every other. The rescue of one soul by Divine grace from

the bondage and dominion of sin is proof of power in the Gospel to save every believing heart. Let that power be fully tested; let a like faith be exercised by every soul, and a like blessed experience will ever be realized. The Gospel has proven the "power of God unto salvation" in every land and in every condition in life. By it men have been saved in every age of the world. From the prince upon the throne to the peasant in the field; from the occupants of marble halls to those who dwell in huts of poverty; from the chief among philosophers to the most abject and ignorant; from the noblest of moralists to the chief of sinners, come those who have experienced its saving power. Souls have been made pure and happy by the Gospel in every nation, tribe and clime. There is evidence strong and conclusive that it possesses power sufficient to save the world.

4. The signs of the times foretell the coming triumph of the kingdom of Christ. Every close student of passing events must be impressed with the fact that Providence is bringing the world nearer and nearer to that brighter day. The spirit of invention and discovery has been wonderfully awakened in the past century, as if to aid in the evangelization of the whole world. Is there need of means to make known the Gospel in all lands? Mines of gold and silver of untold wealth have been providentially opened, and are pouring their rich offerings into the lap of Christian countries. Is

there need of transportation for the Bible and the heralds of the truth? Steam cars swiftly traverse the land and steam vessels plow the ocean, ready to bear the Gospel in haste to every people. Is there need of more active agencies by which to send the messages of truth to all nations? The electric wire encompasses every country, and the story of the cross may now be flashed at lightning speed to every continent, and even to the islands of the sea. The means are providentially provided, and the way is marked out and prepared for spreading the truths of the Gospel throughout the world.

Again, the barriers in the way of the progress of Christianity are being removed, and nations that hitherto have been closed against the Gospel are opening their gates to the heralds of the cross. Fifty years ago the walls of China stood frowning upon the approach of any teacher of Bible truth; but now they are broken down. Christian Churches are being established in many of the cities of that land, and the sons and daughters of China are turning from Confucius to Christ. Fifty years ago Mexico was under the baneful sway of Jesuitism, and ministers of the Gospel were not allowed to preach there a pure Christianity; but now the Jesuit has lost his power, and a free Bible is read and a pure Gospel is received by many of its people. Fifty years ago the city of Rome was under the iron sway of the Papacy, and preaching by a Protestant minister was strictly prohibited; now all religions have a free en-

trance into that old city, the simple Gospel of Christ, which is the power of God unto salvation, is faithfully proclaimed there, and even the pope himself has the opportunity, if he so desires it, to bow at a Methodist altar and seek forgiveness of sin. Fifty years ago Catholic Spain ruled with a despotic hand a large portion of the American continent and the islands of the sea, and compelled obedience to papal traditions and papal ceremonies; but now cruel Spain's scepter has been broken, her colonies in South America have obtained freedom to worship God according to the dictates of their own consciences, and on the islands of the sea the free banner of the cross has been unfurled. Fifty years ago Africa was truly the Dark Continent; but now the light of the Gospel is breaking upon her hills and her valleys, and the songs and shouts of converted souls give cheer to her long-extended coasts. Fifty years ago and less, in our own land, the slave wore his fetters and dared not to learn to read the blessed Word of God; but now every shackle is broken, every bondman is set free, and all may learn the truth as it is in Christ. Surely the clouds are breaking, the darkness of the world's night is passing, and there appears all along the horizon the bright forerunners of the better time coming. Prophecy, the efficacy of prayer, the abundance of Gospel grace, and the propitious signs of the times, all give promise of that good time coming when righteousness shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea.

II. THE PRINCIPLE WHICH PROMISES SUCCESS:
"THE PEOPLE HAD A MIND TO WORK."

Nehemiah and his bands of workmen encountered many difficulties. Discouragements met them at every step. Judah said, "The strength of the bearers of burdens is decayed, and there is much rubbish." Yet they courageously worked on. The old men were present to give counsel and advice, the women to prepare food, the boys and girls to carry water to the weary workmen, the strong and robust to lift the stones from the piles of rubbish to their places in the wall. Ere long they rejoiced to see the city reclaimed from its desolate condition, the gates set up in strength and beauty, and all parts of the wall completed; "for the people had a mind to work."

The salvation of the world is committed to the followers of Christ as the instrumentality. God's people are to build up the wall. Angels have not been commissioned as preachers of the Gospel. The Church is to be the messenger of good news to the sons of men. Would you have the Bible read in every land? You are to bear it thither. Would you have the name of Jesus known and sung in every clime? It is for you to lift up the cross and cry, "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world!" Would you have your neighbors, your friends, your loved ones, converted to God? While God gives His Son to save and His Spirit to convict, it is for you to remove the rubbish, to tell the story of the cross, and to lead to the pool of

cleansing. To the Church is committed this honorable, this highly important duty, and the principle that insures success is a "mind for the work" on the part of God's people.

The failure in the conquest of the world spiritually does not arise from want of sufficient numbers who profess Christianity. Nor is it because Christians lack social position and power, or are wanting in material means. The chief hindrance to revivals in the Churches, the great obstacle in the way of the conversion of the world, is the need of a mind to work on the part of the people of God. There is needed a deeper experimental interest in this salvation. There is wanted a keener sense of the fearful dangers to which sinners are exposed. There is required a more intense spirit of sacrifice for the cause of Christ. There is need of no new Gospel, or new organizations, or new forces. Let the dormant energies of the Church be awakened. Let the elements of power she already possesses be called into lively exercise. Let the people have "a mind for the work," and the ark of the covenant will move forward gloriously.

By this principle is obtained success in temporal affairs. By it our land, but lately a deep wilderness, has been transformed into growing cities, cheerful villages, and beautiful homes. Forests have given way to fertile fields, wild woods to rolling meadow lands, lonesome valleys to lively manufactories, because "the people had a mind to work." The student is successful in solving problems and gaining

knowledge if he has "a mind for the work." The merchant beginning with a small capital may constantly increase his stock, extend his trade, and enlarge his fortune, if he has "a mind for the work." Our Revolutionary fathers, through storms and privations, marched forward to victories that gave us this land of freedom, because they had "a mind for the work." By the same principle of success our land is threaded with railroads from ocean to ocean, our rivers and seas are burdened with vessels of commerce, our country is adorned with schoolhouses and colleges, and life and activity characterize all lines of business. Give to man "a mind for the work," and at once you make him a giant in power and adorn his brow with the crown of success.

In spiritual endeavor the same principle holds good, only human effort is made more effective by the aid of the Spirit of God. Mark the life of the Apostle Paul. Tribulation and persecution constantly met him on his way. The world was arrayed in fierce opposition to his work as a preacher of the Gospel, yet his whole life was a sublime moral triumph. His voice was heard throughout the Roman Empire. Everywhere he gained converts and established Churches, because he had a "mind for the work." Luther, wielding the same spiritual weapons that we have, preaching the same Gospel, declaring the truths of the same Bible, awakened Germany to a life of faith, and caused the old apostate Church of Rome to tremble to its very foundation; for, under God, he had a "mind for the

work." Wesley was successful in bringing multitudes from the paths of evil, in leading thousands to a knowledge of the forgiveness of sin, and in unfurling the banner of holiness to wave over coming millions, because he had a "mind for the work." Our fathers, in perils oft, with sacrifices untold, bore the uplifted cross to all parts of our country, planted Churches that still live, sowed spiritual seed throughout the wilderness which is now producing golden harvests, because, under God, they had a "mind for the work." It was the same principle that led to your happy conversion and mine. Earnest Christians around saw our danger, and were moved with compassion in our behalf. They knew the only means of safety, and led us to the mercy-seat. They aided us with prayers and promises and tears of sympathy; and when our hearts were set free from the burden of guilt and sin, their voices were joined with ours in singing the new song of praise.

Let Zion awake and put on her strength. Let every member be conscious of the influence he possesses and the power he may wield with Divine help. Let the people of God all have a mind for the work. Then there will be no longer mourning for lack of success in the Church. This mind to work for the salvation of souls will bring the hearts of Christians nearer to Christ. It will incite each one to earnest, fervent, effectual prayer. It will give courage to warn the impenitent, to comfort the mourner, and to join in the shout when souls are

converted. This mind for the work will invigorate the Church, will throw down the strongholds of iniquity, and extend the wave of light and holiness on every hand. It will prove the efficient means of ushering in, with shouts of saints on earth and saints in heaven, that good time when all shall know God, "whom to know aright is eternal life."

III. THE GLORIOUS TRIUMPH.

We may be unable to imagine the glory of that day when the whole world is brought under the peaceful scepter of the cross of Christ. There have been periods in the history of the Church that were typical of that glorious event. Take that Church where the spirit of revival prevails. There the zeal and faith of every lover of Christ are quickened. There every member is found earnestly at work in striving to save the lost. There sinners yield to the power of Divine truth, and saints rejoice in the salvation of precious souls. The whole community realizes the presence of Divine power, and the walls of Zion are built up, for "the people have a mind to work." How grand will the scene be when every one professing the name of Christ throughout the world, with faith unwavering and with holy zeal, shall thus earnestly be at work; when every Christian, endued with power, shall gladly assist in making known the truth and lovingly aid in leading sinners to Christ. The pulse of the moral world will then be quickened anew. The forces of evil will be overcome, and kingdoms, and tribes, and

peoples will be given unto the Son for a perpetual possession.

In fancy ascend the mount of vision. Look upon the wall as it is being joined together. Witness the halo of glory that shall encircle the world when it is wholly redeemed to God. The rubbish of sin will be removed. The shadows of evil will fade before the breaking light of that bright morning. Wickedness and all that is degrading to humanity will be driven away. The sunlight of salvation, rising to meridian splendor, will illumine mountain and valley and plain. The whole earth will put on a garb of holiness, and its sons and daughters be arrayed in robes of white.

It is said that some years ago a South Sea Islander and an Australian met aboard a vessel on the Southern Ocean. They were unable to hold a conversation together, not understanding each other's language; yet a strange influence drew them together. The same spirit possessed each heart, the same hope sparkled in each other's eyes. They tried by gesticulations to communicate their thoughts, the one to the other. At last the Australian drew from his pocket a Bible printed in his own tongue, and with tears of joy pressed it to his lips. The South Sea Islander caught the idea and drew from his pocket a Bible printed in his language and fervently kissed it. Then one repeated the untranslated word in his book, Gloria. The other replied with a similar word from his book, Alleluiah; and together they mingled their tears of joy and shouts

of praise, one in heart and one in hope, with the two words so full of meaning, Gloria, Alleluiah.

So when, by the tick of the telegraph, shall come the news that the world is converted to Christ, the sons and daughters of man are all saved, a shout will arise louder than the roar of many waters. The polyglot tribes and peoples of the Western Continent will lift up their glad voices with the shout of "Glory." The polyglot tribes and peoples of the Eastern Continent will shout back "Hallelujah;" and with the islands of the sea the two continents will join together in the glad chorus, "Glory, Hallelujah, the Lord God omnipotent reigneth."

I would love to live and witness that glorious event and join in that grand shout of victory. But it may not be so. Life's weary work may be done before that bright day may dawn. This wornout body may be laid away to rest, these eyes may cease to see, and this heart may grow still before that coming hour; yet the soldiers of Christ will continue in the conflict. The bands of workmen will hasten on the building of the wall. And I have thought when, in that better land, as I mingle with the blood-washed throng, the messengers from earth should bring the news that the last sinner was deeply convicted and was at the mercy-seat praying for pardon, that then I would go to my Heavenly Master and ask that I might go and help that soul in its struggle for salvation. On wings of light I would swiftly fly to that altar of prayer, and to that Sabbath-school scholar crying for pardon I would ten-

derly say, "Look to Jesus; He can save." And as the faith of that trembling penitent laid hold upon the promises, as guilt was rolled away, as pardon and peace were experienced by that heart, I would, with a convoy of angels, return shouting, "The last soul is saved; the world is converted to God; Jesus reigns in every land and in every heart."

Let Thy kingdom, blessed Jesus, come!

IV.

THE CHURCH—ITS ORIGIN AND ITS PERPETUITY.

“Walk about Zion, go round about her; tell the towers thereof. Mark ye well her bulwarks, consider her palaces, that ye may tell it to the generation following. For this God is our God for ever and ever. He will be our guide even unto death.”—PSA. XLVIII, 12, 13, 14.

ZION was originally the name of one of the hills on which the city of Jerusalem was builded. It was afterward applied in the poetical language of Scripture to the whole city. Here was erected the king's palace. Here was set up the ark of the Lord when brought to the city by David. On one of the hills stood the temple of Solomon, richly adorned, and always redolent with the incense arising from its altars. The city of Zion was the center for the tribes of Israel, both of civil and religious service.

This Psalm is a patriotic song of the Hebrew poet. It tells of his great admiration and affection for Jerusalem. It is the utterance of praise and thanksgiving to God for deliverance in time of danger. The confederate kings had gathered in

hostility against Zion. Their army had encompassed its walls and threatened its overthrow. But instead of making an attack they strangely became panic-stricken. Fear took hold upon them, and they hastened away. The siege was raised and no damage had been wrought upon the city. The Psalmist recognizes the hand of God in the deliverance obtained. He breaks forth in the glad song of praise: "Great is the Lord and greatly to be praised in the city of our God, in the mountain of His holiness. As we have heard so have we seen in the city of the Lord of hosts. God will establish it forever." He calls upon "Mount Zion to rejoice, and the daughters of Judah to be glad." The city "beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth," had been saved from her enemies. Not a tower had been overturned, not a bulwark had been destroyed, not a palace had been despoiled of its beauty. God was known in Zion for a refuge. His mighty arm had brought deliverance. His love and His watch-care would "establish it forever."

The Psalm also evidently possesses a higher spiritual meaning. Zion is a type of the Church of God. Like Zion, she is "beautiful for situation, and is the joy of the whole earth." She, too, has passed through seasons of greatest danger. She has been surrounded by the combined hosts of evil. She has been threatened by powerful enemies. But God has been known in her palaces for a refuge. His powerful hand has been present to deliver in every conflict. His promise still holds good to be her God

for ever and ever. And we may join with the Psalmist in his notes of exultation: "Walk about Zion, go round about her; tell the towers thereof. Mark ye well her bulwarks, consider her palaces, that ye may tell it to the generation following. For this God is our God for ever and ever. He will be our guide even unto death."

I. THERE IS MANIFESTED IN THE ORGANIZATION OF THE CHURCH DIVINE WORKMANSHIP.

The Hebrews were Divinely guided in the building of Jerusalem. He was the architect of her beautiful palaces, of her walls for protection, and of her grand temple for worship. The glory of His presence overshadowed her altars and made sacred her holy places. In every part of this city of His chosen people were evidences of the touches of His hand. So in the establishment of the Church among men are manifestations of Divine workmanship. According to His all-wise plans her foundation has been laid; by His superintending care the whole superstructure has been completed.

We do not use the term Church to designate any special company of God's worshipers; nor does it refer to any single denomination of Christians; but by the Church is meant that spiritual body composed of all who love God and faithfully serve Him. Wherever are found those who worship Him in sincerity and truth, there is a part of God's true Church. With them He is present to give comfort and guidance; to such He has given His rich and

precious promises ; and for such He will ever prove a sure refuge and deliverer.

It is true there are those who look upon the Church as only a human organization. They claim that it is a device of man, the mere work of priestcraft, a cunning invention by which to enslave human thought, and to bind burdens upon all who may be induced to enter its fold. They discard its teachings as only the teachings of designing men ; they neglect its ordinances as only the commands of men, and use every means to destroy its influence as only that which is put forth by men. But a careful examination of the doctrines which the Church is commissioned to make known unto the world, a candid, unbiased, survey of the effect of observing its ordinances and services, and an honest recognition of its wonderful influence in making the world better, will fully answer and dispel all these objections of an unbelieving world. It is therefore with joyful confidence the Christian invites all to examine the Church ; "walk about Zion, go round about her." Look upon her when the sun shines brightest ; consider closely all her appointments ; scrutinize every work wrought by her hand ; feel the uplifting influence that issues always from her presence, and every unbiased mind must admit that "God is in the midst of her ;" every partaker of the blessed truth she publishes will declare that truly Zion "is the joy of the whole earth ;" and all must see that God Himself has established the Church. The evidence of Divine workmanship in her organization may be found :

1. In her doctrines: "Tell the towers thereof." The towers of any city are the most prominent objects about it, and first attract the attention of the traveler approaching its site. The towers of Jerusalem rose high above its walls and other buildings. These towers typify the doctrines of the Church, the grand truths committed to her to make known unto the world; they are her chief characteristics, and are first to arrest attention. They are truths not discovered by human reason, but Divinely revealed to man. They are doctrines full of comfort to the believing heart and ever attest the wisdom and love of their Divine Author.

Take the first grand doctrine proclaimed by the Church: there is one God who is the Creator of all things. All the teachings, all the services, all the work of the Church are inseparably connected with this truth. Remove this foundation principle, and the whole fabric will fall. But how do we come to know that there is one God who is the Creator of all things? Human reason could not have made the discovery. Reasoning from effect to cause would not have suggested the idea of one God. There are many effects manifest to man, and as every effect must have a cause, his process of reasoning would have brought him to the conclusion that there must be many gods as the causes of these many effects. Polytheism is the result of reasoning, but monotheism is a revelation. The idea that there is but one God is a revealed idea. When, however, this truth is once revealed, its demonstra-

tion may be effected by reasoning from effect to cause. When the idea is made known, then man may "reason through nature up to nature's God." God first declares His own existence. He first announces the fact that "in the beginning God made the heavens and the earth." The voice of the Church publishes everywhere this revealed truth. Then every blade of grass, every bursting bud, every singing bird, every floating cloud, every glittering star, and every blazing sun attest the truthfulness and good philosophy of this doctrine. Revelation and nature both unite in pointing to the one great first cause of all things. And we with joy may look up to Him who

"Warms in the sun, refreshes in the breeze;
Glowes in the stars, and blossoms in the trees;
Lives through all life, extends through all extent,
Spreads undivided, operates unspent."

Take the second great truth proclaimed by the Church: that in the sufferings and death of Jesus Christ an atonement is made for sinful man through which he may obtain pardon and rejoice in hope. This is not only a provision made by Divine mercy, but it is a fact Divinely made known. It is good news which heaven reveals. Man may naturally be conscious of sin. He may perhaps realize that he is guilty, and have some forebodings of condemnation; but he knows not where to go for help. He can discover nowhere any promise of pardon or any provision for the removal of guilt incurred.

It is not found in the natural world. Everywhere there is law; to every law is attached a penalty; and every violator of nature's law suffers the penalty. In the whole realm of nature there is no intimation of mercy for the guilty or provision made for pardon. Nowhere is found a propitiation for sin. Justice ever stands demanding that the guilty one suffer for the sin he has committed.

Nor do we find in the investigations of science or the discoveries of philosophy an idea of an atonement for sin or means of rescue from the consequences of guilt. How could man conscious of guilt and sin be saved? It was the great problem of the ages how God could be just and yet forgive the sinner. It engaged the most earnest thought of patriarch and prophet. Angels, with their mighty intellects, could not find the answer. Yet from guilty man the unceasing cry for pardon and peace continues to arise. When he was ready to sink down in utter despair the problem was solved. One who could open the book sealed with seven seals was found. God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son to make an atonement for man. Jesus, in the garden and on the cross, in letters of blood, worked out the problem. He lay down His life for man; He suffered in man's stead; He died, the just for the unjust; and from the moment that He cried, "It is finished!" and bowed His head in death, pardon and salvation have been possible for man. Then sprang up new hope for a guilty world. Then God could be just and forgive

the sinner. Then dying man could look and live. High over the walls of Zion rises this grand tower. As it glitters in the sunlight of Divine mercy the desires of your heart and mine, like clusters of vines, may ever twine about it, while all condemnation is gone, and peace, like a river, flows through our souls.

Take the doctrine of man's immortality. The Church of God proclaims this truth to the world. We treasure with delight the thought that we have souls that shall never die. But what are the grounds of this pleasing faith? Whence do we gain any assurance of this glorious fact? The ancient heathen philosophers wrote beautifully of man's immortality. They hoped that, while the body must die, the soul would still live. Yet they had doubts about its certainty. This cheerful dream was doubtless inspired by the rays of light afforded to them by tradition, or by slight contact, perhaps, with the teachings of Hebrew prophets; but the light they had on the subject was too dim to assure them that it was a fact. In the Gospel, however, life and immortality are clearly revealed. Death may wield his scepter over all of man that is material, but he has no power over the soul. Every human form may faint and die, every human member may grow cold and lifeless, but the thinking, the hoping, the happy spirit of man will live on forever. With this truth of revelation shedding its beams about our steps we may even approach the grave with a heart full of joy. We may there gladly sing:

“There is a balm for those who weep,
A rest for weary pilgrims found;
And while their mold'ring ashes sleep
Low in the ground,

The soul, of origin divine,
God's glorious image freed from clay,
In heaven's eternal sphere shall shine,
A star of day.

The sun is but a spark of fire,
A transient meteor in the sky;
The soul, immortal as its sire,
Shall never die.”

Again, take the doctrine of the resurrection of the body. In this we find farther evidence of Divine revelation. The reign of death is universal; all men die. Parting scenes are witnessed in every household. The dearest earthly bonds are severed. Burning tears and deepest grief will not stay the stroke of death. Funeral trains pass on every road. Graves are found on every hill, and tombstones are erected in every valley. The body of man dies, and is lowered into its resting-place to the sad notes “earth to earth, and dust to dust.” The troubled heart often asks the question, “If a man die, shall he live again?” Reason has no premise on which to found an affirmative answer. Human philosophy can not afford the faintest hope of restoration to life. The attempt of some to find in the return of spring after the deadly blasts of winter are gone a proof of the resurrection fails. Vegetation revives then, but it is no resurrection.

The new spring brings with it new grasses, new leaves, new flowers. It is not the old growth of the past year reviving from the dead. The faded flower no more unfolds its tinted petals nor sheds fresh fragrance on the morning air. The green grass that covered the hillsides has become lifeless, its verdure is gone; it has turned to dust. The works of nature, the discoveries of science, the ingenious reasoning of philosophy, all fail to give proof of a resurrection. They do not find even an intimation of such a possibility. Their only reply can be "death is an eternal sleep." But, speaking through the Church, God gives a better hope to man. Go with me to yonder grave where the body of Lazarus reposes in death. Jesus, the world's Savior, standing there, may weep, too, at death's ruinous work; but hearken to His voice. Gently fall the words from His lips, "I am the resurrection and the life." At His command, the thrill of Divine power awakens the sleeper, and Lazarus lives again. Or stand by the side of the risen Christ on yonder mount. He has conquered death, and is now about to ascend from earth. A glorious promise is left as the heritage of all His disciples: "Because I live, ye shall live also." That to which nature is a stranger, that which science fails to make known, God in His blessed Word reveals to His saints: "This mortal shall put on immortality," in "Christ shall all be made alive;" all that are in their graves "shall hear the voice of the Son of God and come forth." They shall live again. This tower rises in

beauty above the grave of every saint, and from its hope-inspiring pinnacles sheds light upon the darkest valleys of earth. Grief may now be assuaged, tears of separations may now be wiped away; for there is sure promise of the dawn of the glorious resurrection morning.

These truths of revelation are fountains of joy to all of God's people. They are the Gospel of good news which the Church is commanded to preach to every creature. "Tell the towers thereof." They all stand in their places. They rise in beauty over the walls of Zion, and ever gleam in the mellow sunlight of heaven. They are the perennial source of joy to the hearts of men.

The evidence of Divine workmanship in the organization of the Church may be found:

2. In her means of offensive and defensive warfare: "Mark ye well her bulwarks."

The bulwarks built along the walls of the city were strongholds for the soldier in time of battle. While protected within them from the missiles of the enemy he could shoot his arrows with deadly effect against the approaching foe. When these strongholds were properly constructed and fully manned, it was difficult for any hostile force to break down the walls or take the city.

The bulwarks of the Church are Divinely appointed. From them defense may be effective against attack, and from them the darts of truth may be hurled to overcome error.

There is the bulwark of Divine truth. An open

Bible is the stronghold of the Church. It makes known God's will to man. It clearly shows his great need on account of sin. It unfolds the rich and gracious provisions for man's salvation. It is full of promises of life and immortality. Its truths dispel the dark clouds of error; its precepts mark out a plain pathway for God's Israel; its rewards held up to view include the joys of the life that now is and also of that which is to come. It is a lamp to the feet; a shining light on the way of life; an efficient instrumentality in the salvation of men.

Many years ago a young monk in Germany became an earnest student to know the truth. He oftentimes counted his beads; he zealously performed works of penance; he regularly visited his confessor; he faithfully attended the sacraments. Yet his heart found not the rest for which it longed. He panted for a peace that he could not gain. His soul was oppressed by a burden that seemed impossible to remove. At last he withdrew from all association with men, and buried himself in the lonely cloister cell, hoping in quiet meditation to find that for which he so earnestly longed. While in that lonely abode he discovered an old book. Its lids were covered with dust and its leaves had for a long time been unturned. He opened its fading pages through curiosity, and began to read its chapters. He soon became deeply interested in its wonderful teachings. It opened a new world to his thoughts. He studied its interesting truths. He

read with untold delight the story of the cross and Jesus' dying love. Accepting the good news of salvation, he yielded to the influences of the Holy Spirit, believed in Jesus, the sinner's Savior, as there revealed, and, being justified by faith, he found peace with God. The burden had fallen from his heart, and his soul was filled with joy. Pressing the Bible to his heart, he left the gloomy cell, he laid aside his monkish garb, and, going out upon the streets, he preached to his countrymen Christ and Him crucified. With the truths of that Bible Luther was instrumental in leading Germany to Christ, in banishing papal superstition from German minds, and in causing the foundation of the Vatican at Rome to tremble with fear. An open Bible is still the stronghold of the Church; its truths are for the healing of the nations; to all it brings the light of live-giving power.

There is the bulwark of prayer. Man by his own strength would fail in conflicts with the enemy. He would be unable to overturn the strongholds of iniquity without aid. The Church in its warfare with the hosts of evil needs to be endued with power. Success in overcoming wickedness and in bringing the world to God demands help Divine. God's presence must go with Israel, or defeat will come. By prayer this help may be obtained. "Ask, and you shall receive," is the blessed assurance. To His saints upon their knees help is given. At the altar of prayer the Church obtains power to foil the foe and to march forward to glorious triumph.

Prayers ascending from the closet, prayers offered at the family circle, and prayers going up from the altars of the Church are accepted as sweet incense on high, and the Divine presence and the Divine aid are given. "Prayer moves the arm that moves the universe." Who shall be able to withstand the hosts of Israel if God be with them?

There is, as a fortification, a Divinely appointed ministry. This provision for the propagation of the truth and the advancement of the cause of righteousness in the world is marked by more than human wisdom. At all times the voice of a living ministry is heard. The message of love and mercy floats on every breeze. In unison the same theme is dwelt upon in every pulpit and by every preacher. The early apostles of Christ were few in number and unlettered men; but success accompanied them everywhere. Adherents to the Christian faith were gained wherever they went; the spiritually dead world was aroused by their words; and though everywhere persecuted, Churches were founded and multitudes led to Christ. To-day the same agency is at work in overcoming evil. The cross is lifted up in every land, the banner of Christ is unfurled to every breeze, and the truths of the Gospel are proclaimed among all nations. With tireless energy, with increasing zeal, with untold sacrifices, these Divinely commissioned men are marching forward constantly, and there is good promise of the world being soon brought under the mild scepter of our Prince Immanuel.

“Mark ye well her bulwarks.” They are firmly established on the walls of Zion. They are active and efficient in overcoming the attacks of the foe. They are wisely adapted to hasten the oncoming of the kingdom of Christ.

3. God’s handiwork is manifest in the precious privileges and ordinances of the Church. “Consider her palaces.” The palace was the richly furnished mansion where abode the family of the king. The royal sons and daughters there held delightful communion together. At one board they feasted upon the richest viands. Notes of joy and sweet strains of music enlivened every hall. So the palaces of Zion are full of delight and gladness. The children of God there tell of His loving mercy and saving power. Songs of triumph ever fall from their lips. Smiles of joy ever light up their countenances. Heavenly hopes ever inspire their bosoms. How joyful the scene as they mingle with each other and hold sweet communion with the great King! There faith grows stronger; there the graces of the Spirit are developed; there heart beats to heart in the ecstasy of love, and the glory of God overshadows each soul.

Walk about Zion. Look upon her towers; examine her bulwarks; pass through her palaces. Everywhere there are touches of the Divine hand and evidences of Divine workmanship. The worshiper at the shrines of nature may turn away from the Church and boast of the wonderful teachings of science and philosophy. He may become enrap-

tured with the scenes of beauty and the display of grandeur there presented. But there are heights and depths of Divine manifestation which he can not there find. The Christian can join heartily with him in admiration of the glory of God declared in the heavens above and the earth beneath. He, too, may be charmed with the beauty of bursting buds, with the fragrance of blooming flowers, and with the music of singing birds; he, too, may wonder at the grandeur of mountain or ocean or starlit heavens; and he, too, may join in the song of praise to the God of nature; but he stops not there. The horizon of his enraptured vision grows larger and grander as he walks about Zion. There steadily shines forth the light of new truths. There hope is begotten by displays of Divine mercy. There he obtains a blessed assurance of a home beyond the skies lit up by Divine glory. There he is enabled to feast on foretastes of immortality and eternal life. Zion truly is "beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth."

II. IN THE PERPETUITY OF THE CHURCH THERE IS EVIDENCE OF DIVINE WATCH-CARE. "This God is our God for ever and ever. He will be our guide even unto death."

The Psalmist ascribes to God the deliverance of Zion from danger. He had broken the ships of Tarshish with an east wind. He had sent a fearful panic into the hearts of the enemy and caused them to flee away. He had saved the city from threat-

ened destruction. In her palaces He was found for a refuge. His watch-care would enable her to stand forever. The same Divine presence and power insures the perpetuity of the Church. There are some who are always ready to prophesy evil to the Church. They imagine that she is already in a state of decrepitude. They fancy that they can see signs of certain decay. They are eager to note her failures, and take pleasure in foretelling her fall. But these prophecies are only the words of the faint-hearted and faultfinding. The Church is steadily moving forward. She is constantly gaining in numbers and in power; and notwithstanding there may be prophets of evil within her pales, and bold enemies without, she will stand forever.

I. Her perpetuity is made certain by the omnipresence of her center of power.

The location of the center of power, the place where laws are enacted and executive orders are issued, has much to do with the prosperity and life of any government or nation. The fall of the Roman Empire was doubtless hastened by the great distance of its outlying provinces from the center of power. Its rulers and lawmakers dwelt at Rome. From Rome went forth orders and decrees to be executed in distant parts of the empire. But many of these provinces were at so great a distance from Rome that hostile forces might overcome them or revolutions be accomplished before aid could be secured from the seat of empire. This weakness in its policy of government helped to hasten its over-

throw. In our system of government there is a safeguard against such danger. Our center of power is not local; our President and lawmakers may be gathered in Washington, but they do not constitute our government. They are merely our servants, appointed to execute our will; "we, the people," are the rulers. Wherever is found a loyal American citizen, there is our center of power. Whether he dwells in a mansion or in a humble cottage; whether his home is in the city or on the rolling prairie; whether he is found in Washington or on the shores of the Pacific,—wherever he unfurls the starlit flag, there is a son of royalty; there is a ruler of this country; there is our center of power. While true patriotism inspires the soul of the American citizen, our government must stand. No foe can successfully invade its borders; no internal disorder can weaken its foundations, no ruthless hand can pull down our flag; for our center of power is everywhere to defend, to sustain, to preserve. O, may that banner wave on in beauty forever, over a brave and free people!

In the Church the center of power is the omnipresent Spirit of God. That Spirit which gives life to man's soul; that Spirit which fills the heart with joy; that Spirit which leads on God's hosts to conquest, is present in every part of the Church. He is the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night to every true Israelite. He endues with power God's saints in all lands; He goes with the messengers of good news to every people; He visits the homes of the poor and the sorrowing; He brings

joy and deliverance to those who are in prison ; He stands by the bedside of the dying ; He is their rod and their staff as they pass through the dark valley. He is everywhere present, and possesses almighty power to guard the Church against her foes and to lead on to victory the hosts of Prince Immanuel. "This is our God for ever and ever. He will be our guide even unto death."

2. The perpetuity of the Church may be argued from her history.

The apostles of Christ, as they went forth preaching the Gospel, met with opposition on every hand. The early Christian Church suffered from fearful persecutions. The prison, the stake, the sword, were all employed against her progress. But the "blood of the saints became the seed of the Church." The Christian religion extended its influence wider and wider. From a little band in an upper chamber in Jerusalem, the disciples of Christ were soon numbered by the thousands ; and in three centuries Christianity gained the control of the Roman Empire.

The Church was Divinely preserved during the revolutions of the Dark Ages. When her enemies failed to overcome her by attacks from without, they insidiously entered her holy places and tried to put out the light that shone from her altars. They attempted to suppress the reading of an open Bible by the people ; they established penances and priestly confessions ; they introduced gorgeous ceremonies and flowing robes ; they appointed tink-

ling bells and monastic orders; they took delight in ecclesiastical impurity and ordained the inquisition; yet after all their inventions and efforts, they failed to destroy the Zion of God. Her lamp was not put out. She still lived; and out of the deep wilderness you can see her coming; she marches forth in triumph, like an army with banners, leaning upon the arm of her Beloved.

Finally, the Church has safely withstood the severest thrusts of infidelity. Her conflicts with unbelief have been many and long continued. In every age and in every clime she has been opposed by fallen human nature. Her teachings have been discarded by the skeptic, and her overthrow confidently predicted by her enemies. One of the shrewdest infidel writers prophesied her fall. "It took," said he, "twelve men to write up Christianity. I will show the world that one man can write it down." But his boasting words remain unfulfilled. Even the chamber where this infidel penned his philippics against the Christian religion is said to have become a Bible publishing-house. Another skeptic, in his efforts to destroy the Christian Church, in his coarse tirades against Divine truth, predicted that it would not be long "till a corn-crib would hold all of the followers of Jesus." The blasphemous voice of this skeptical writer has long since been hushed in death. His book designed to overthrow Christianity is now seldom read; its influence is but little felt; but the Church has been steadily enlarging her borders. She has lengthened her cords and strengthened her stakes. The

number of the followers of Jesus has been increased manifold, until in every continent and on every island the cross is lifted up, and around the standard of the crucified One are gathering the sons of men. "The mountain of the house of the Lord has been established in the top of the mountains; and all nations are flowing into it."

Zion still stands, beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth. This God who has hitherto preserved the Church has promised to be her God forever. The nations of the earth may rise and fall, civil governments be built up and then torn down, but the Church of God will stand forever. It is pleasant to indulge the hope that our country's flag may always be unfurled; that it may continue to the latest generation to wave over the homes of the brave and the land of the free. But even should it be torn from its staff and be trailed in the dust, we have the blessed assurance that the banner of the cross will wave on for ever and ever. The Church of God is built upon a rock, and the gates of hell can not prevail against it.

Into its open door my steps were led when quite young. From its fountains of truth my soul has been drinking the healing waters for many years. In old age its associations, its services, its songs of praise and the hopes it inspires, continue to renew my strength; and ere long I shall greet with joy a transfer from the Church militant to the Church triumphant, from the joys and triumphs afforded on earth to the joys and triumphs eternal in heaven.

V.

SALVATION BY GRACE.

“For by grace are ye saved through faith.”—EPH.
II, 8.

THE constant theme of the Apostle Paul was Christ and Him crucified as the Savior of sinners. This theme engaged his most earnest thought and meditation. It was the text of all of his sermons. Whenever he preached, whether to Jews or Gentiles, he presented Christ and Him crucified as the Savior of sinners. It formed the central idea of all of his Epistles. While he failed not to present and enforce the duties of practical Christian life, he especially held up the cross as man's only hope, and pointed to Christ and Him crucified as the Savior of men. This was the great theme of his thoughts, his sermons, and his letters, and to make it known to the world was the mission of his life. It is no wonder, then, that in his Epistle to the Ephesians he dwells upon this theme. While speaking to them of their blessed experience in religious things, he reminds them that Christ crucified was the source of all their joys; that it was the love of God manifested in the gift of His Son that had enabled them

to obtain pardon and peace and hope of heaven ; for, says he, "By grace are ye saved through faith."

If this theme could constantly engross the mind of Paul—a man who possessed large intellectual powers ; a man who was learned in the law ; a man who was zealous in standing up for the truth ; if it could form the chief subject of his thoughts, of his conversations, and of his Epistles—should it not arrest our attention, should it not engage our minds, and should it not be the inspiration of our lives ? It comes to us as the great theme of the ages, the wonder of the angels, the sheet-anchor of the world's hopes.

The text affords us an important lesson in regard to the ruin wrought upon men by sin and the full and complete deliverance provided in the Gospel.

I. **THERE WAS NEED OF DIVINE GRACE** that man might obtain salvation. The text implies this fact.

Without Divine favor, without God's merciful provisions and loving help, there was no possible escape from the ruinous consequences of sin. By no efforts of his own, by no merits that he possessed, could man have been saved. His only hope was in the grace of God afforded in the gift of His Son ; his only means of deliverance was in the atoning merits of the sufferings and death of the Lord Jesus Christ.

In order to give proof of this fact and to forc-

bly impress its importance upon the mind, the apostle describes the state of man as ruined by sin. He draws a picture of the moral condition of the Ephesians before their conversion, and points out the fearful danger from which they had been rescued by the Gospel. In this picture of the Ephesians before they experienced salvation he shows the natural condition of every human being; it is the portrait of every heart while without God's saving grace.

1. They were morally dead. Before they were "quickenened" or brought to life they were "dead in trespasses and sins." Paul does not here refer to the death of the body. He speaks of their moral or spiritual death, and states that this death had been brought about by "trespasses and sins." They were dead, and yet alive. While the members of their bodies were alive and active, the functions of their spiritual being were paralyzed by sin. They could see, and hear, and walk, yet morally they were dead. As were the Ephesians, so is every man without salvation. But you may ask, "What is it to be morally or spiritually dead? What is spiritual death?" The answer may be found by solving the problem of temporal death which Paul uses figuratively. When sight fails, and the breath ceases, and the heart stands still in your friend, you say he is dead. But what is that death? You do not mean that he has been annihilated. His body lies before you. His hands are cold, his eyes are closed, his heart-throbs have ceased, but his body still ex-

ists. And because the body, which you see, still exists, you may rightly infer that his soul, which you can not see, also exists. In the act of death there was not an end of his being, but certainly a separation,—the spirit, the living principle, had been separated from the body, the material form. Hence temporal death is a separation of soul and body. Spiritual death is also a separation. It is the separation of the life-giving principle from man's moral being. In the very day that man committed sin, the Spirit of God, the life-giving principle of man's soul, withdrew; a separation took place between God's Spirit and man's spirit. He was left spiritually dead; without purity, without holy desires, without hope; dead to all the emotions of a happy life; dead to all the smiles of Divine approval. To quicken to life again man thus spiritually dead, Divine grace was necessary; Divine power only could perform the work.

2. They were naturally inclined to evil; they willingly "walked according to the course of this world." The inclination of their hearts was to do evil according to the dictates of an ungodly world; the whole bent of their nature was towards its wicked follies and sinful fashions. At the unholy shrines which the world provided they were willing worshipers. How truly is this the picture of the natural man! He voluntarily follows whither the world would lead. He readily yields to its siren voice inviting him to paths of sinful pleasures. He performs with delight its behests of unrighteous-

ness. He eagerly quaffs the waters that flow from its impure fountains. He applauds its unbelief of Divine truth, and revels in its disregard of Divine commands. Whatever a sinful world presents he readily accepts, and even its most unreasonable theories find in him a willing disciple. This is not only true of those who have never been purified by grace, it is also true of those who, having experienced God's saving power, have grown cold in His service and turned again to the world. A striking instance was found in a certain Church. One who had been a very faithful and active member and lived for a length of time an earnest Christian, in an hour of trial became estranged from God's service. Her zeal grew cold, her faith became weak, her interest in performing religious duties was gone. While in this backslidden condition a skeptical lecturer, one who had no faith in the saving power of the Gospel, unfolded in her presence some of the materialistic theories of the world. She was captivated by his so-called philosophy, and at once accepted his teachings as the truth. The next time she met her pastor she was even ready to controvert with him some of the essentials of Christianity. With all the zeal of a new convert she announced to him her new faith, and declared that she was sure the world would never be converted nor the millennial day dawn until the shape of the human head was changed; that unless an organ of devotion was developed on man's cranium he could not become a devotional being; that his moral character

depended upon the existence upon his skull of the organ of morality. She had forgotten that the coming of the millennial day and the possession of a devotional spirit depended not so much upon the shape of the head as the state of the heart; that the millennial day would dawn when the heart of humanity is made new by the Spirit of God. The man who is spiritually dead naturally pursues a life "according to the course of the world."

3. They were under the control of the spirit of evil. They walked "according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that worketh in the children of disobedience." By nature inclined to evil, sin had provided for them a crafty leader in works of unrighteousness. They had a captain whose commands they obeyed, but he was the captain of the hosts of darkness. They had a banner under which they marched, but it was the black flag of Satan. They had a warfare in which they were engaged, but it was a battle against truth and righteousness. They were led by "the prince of the power of the air." In the same ranks and under the same flag are marshaled to-day all whose hearts have not been savingly touched by the grace of God. Volunteers in the army of Satan, they are helping, by their example and their works, to build up his kingdom.

4. They were heirs of Divine wrath. The apostle draws in darkest lines the condition of the Ephesians and the picture of all men who are dead in trespasses and sins. He represents them as exposed to fearful danger. They are not only spirit-

ually dead; they are not only inclined to evil; they are not only "led captive by the devil at his will;" but, still worse than this, they are "children of wrath;" and if they are children of wrath, then are they heirs of wrath. The inheritance which awaits them is wrath. The trend of their whole life of sin is towards wrath. How full of terror is their condition! Dark clouds are gathering over their skies. Deep mutterings of the coming storm can already be heard. "Children of wrath!" It is not the wrath of man to which they are exposed; they might overcome their fellows who would rise up against them. It is not the wrath of the rulers of the land with which they are threatened; they might escape beyond their jurisdiction. It is the wrath of God! They are heirs of His wrath who is Almighty and can not look upon sin with the least degree of allowance. They are heirs of the wrath of Him who made them, and who, as Judge, is to fix their eternal doom. Heirs of wrath!

How can fallen man be saved? Spiritually dead, how can he be quickened into spiritual life? In bondage to sin, a captive to Satan's power, how can he be set free? An heir of Divine wrath, how can the dark clouds of condemnation be rolled back and man be restored to Divine favor? Sin had formed a deep gulf between earth and heaven. Man had no skill or means to bridge that fearful chasm, and on it pass over to Divine favor. Helpless and hopeless, he was ready to perish. But when despair was about to overwhelm him, grace was provided;

a way of safety was found. Jesus looked with an eye of pity upon him. On wings of love He flew to man's relief. He laid down His own life that man might live. On the abutments of His loving humanity and adorable Divinity He cast up a bridge over the gulf of despair, cementing its every joint with His own heart's warm blood. Now man may pass over that highway from the darkness of sin and guilt to the light of Divine favor and the liberty of the children of God. Grace is provided, and man may be saved.

II. GRACE BECOMES EFFECTIVE IN MAN'S SALVATION THROUGH FAITH. "FOR BY GRACE ARE YE SAVED THROUGH FAITH."

The possibility of man's recovery from sin and its effects is made certain by the provision of Divine grace; but how is that grace applied that salvation may be realized? This question is of the utmost importance, and yet different answers to it are given even by professed Christians. The different opinions held and the different theories advanced should be tested only by the light of God's Word.

1. There are those who advance the theory that the provision of grace insures the salvation of all men unconditionally. They hold that God's love for the whole world led to the gift of His Son in man's behalf, and that nothing can limit the saving power of that love; that man is saved by Divine grace, and therefore that grace is all-powerful to save all men; that there is nothing in man and nothing can be

done by man to prevent that grace from accomplishing the salvation of the whole world. But such teachers fail to note the emphatic language of the apostle. He not only says, "By grace are ye saved," but he goes farther, "By grace are ye saved through faith." He presents faith as necessary. Grace is provided, but without faith there is no promise of salvation. Many other Scriptures teach the same lesson. The forerunner of Christ preached "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life, and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him." Faith in Christ is necessary for life here and life hereafter. He that buildeth his house on other foundation is building on sand. When the rains descend, and the floods come, and the winds blow and beat upon that house, it will fall, and with it all the hopes of the bliss of heaven. The storehouse of grace is full, but we must draw supplies from it by faith. That grace may be made effective in giving us spiritual life, in cleansing our hearts from sin, in turning away the clouds of Divine condemnation, we must believe on the Son. Faith affords safety and shelter by hiding us in the cleft side of a loving Savior. Without faith in Christ the benefits of Divine grace are ineffective, and man lives exposed to the fearful consequences of sin and unrighteousness.

2. Another theory is presented in regard to the application of grace in man's salvation. It is held that faith is the necessary condition, but that faith is an especial gift of God; that man can not believe

unless he receives that especial gift, and that if he does not believe he can not be saved. The words of the apostle in connection with the text are made the basis of this theory: "By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God." It is claimed that Paul here asserts that faith is the especial gift of God. How, then, it is asked, can man believe and be saved unless that especial gift is bestowed upon him? But the language of the apostle will not bear such an interpretation. Faith is not the antecedent of the term "that" which is asserted to be the gift of God. The original Greek word translated "that" does not agree in gender with the term "faith." Its antecedent, which is the especial gift of God, is neither the term "faith" nor "grace," but the whole phrase, "By grace are ye saved through faith." The glorious provision of salvation by grace through faith is that which is not of ourselves, but is of God. The wonderful plan of salvation by grace through faith is not the device of human reason or human philosophy; it is God's own handiwork. It is God's especial gift to man. He provided the atoning sacrifice; He appointed the simple condition of faith; He applies the saving grace to man's heart; He gives spiritual life and hope of heaven. The work of salvation is all wrought by Him. Again, if faith were the especial gift of God bestowed upon some and withholden from others, then could those who are lost because they received not that gift, regard God as partial and therefore unjust, and truly plead that

they were not responsible for their eternal destiny. Take, as an illustration, the case of Dives. The rich man, it is said, lived in affluence and pleasure, gave loose reins to his appetites and passions, regarded none of God's warnings against sin or His offers of saving mercy, and that he "died, and in hell he lifted up his eyes being in torment." Now, go to him, in imagination, and ask him: "What brought you to such an awful doom? Was there not in yonder world salvation provided for man? Was it not salvation by grace and through faith? Why, then, did you not seek that salvation that would have kept you out of this place of torment?" If the theory we are considering be true, he could very well reply: "Yes, there was salvation provided. It was salvation by grace and through faith. But faith was an especial gift of God to those who were to be saved. I did not receive that gift and therefore could not believe; and because I did not believe I could not be saved. I was brought into the world, by no choice of my own, with a sinful nature. By a life of wickedness I incurred guilt, and condemnation. There was no pardon for me, for I could not believe. I am lost, eternally lost; but I could not avoid it." Would he not be justified in charging God with partiality and injustice in withholding from one of His fallen creatures the means of recovery? Such a theory is clearly not in harmony with God's attributes of mercy and justice; nor does it accord with the teachings of His Word or His dealings with men.

3. Another answer to the question, "How is grace made effective in man's salvation?" is that he is saved by grace through faith, that each one possesses the power to believe, and is held responsible for the exercise of that power. Salvation is provided by grace, help to believe is afforded by grace, but the acceptance or rejection of salvation is a matter of free volition on the part of man. This theory is free from the charge of partiality against the Divine administration, and fully recognizes man's responsibility. Let this theory also be tested in the case of the rich man and Lazarus. Dives lived surrounded by wealth and friends. He entered with delight into every round of sinful pleasure. His days were spent in the gratification of desire and appetite. He gave no heed to the earnest warnings against performing deeds of wickedness or to the frequent messages of saving mercy. He lived a sinful life, and "died, lifting up his eyes being in torment." Go ask him: "What brought you to this place of dark despair? Was not salvation provided for you in yonder world? Why, then, were you not saved and permitted to enter the land of the blessed?" He could only reply in deepest sadness: "Yes, salvation was provided for every sinner; it was salvation by grace through faith; warnings of coming danger were often given; offers of mercy fell upon my ear day by day; I was urged to repent of sin and accept by faith the sinners' Savior; I had the power to believe, but I loved sin too well. The pleasures and frivolities of a wicked

world occupied my willing mind too much for me to think of eternal things. I would not repent; I refused to believe. I am lost, and my condemnation is just. God was longsuffering and merciful; I alone am responsible for my eternal doom." He could bring no complaint against God for partiality in His dispensation of mercy to men, nor find fault with being assigned to the fearful doom he had voluntarily chosen.

The objection may be raised that if man possesses this power to believe, and is saved because he exercises faith, that then he will ascribe the glory of his salvation to his own works and not to God. But there are no grounds on which to found such an objection. The whole plan of salvation is of God, and to Him belongs all the glory of its results. Take the case of Lazarus as an illustration. It is said that while in this world he was very poor and severely afflicted. He was laid at the rich man's gate, and gladly fed upon the crumbs that fell from the rich man's table. While lying there he "died, and was carried by angels to Abraham's bosom." Go to him in his glorified estate and ask him how he was enabled to escape from the sorrows of earth and to enter the Paradise of God. Could you hear his voice, I have thought he would joyfully answer: "In the world I was a child of poverty, and my body was sore with disease. I lay at the rich man's gate, and gladly ate of the crumbs that fell from the rich man's table. I had no friends to sympathize with me. The passing dog was my only phy-

sician. While I lay there in pain and suffering, I heard the voice of one singing in the distance. The strange melody arrested my attention, and as I earnestly listened the words of the chorus fell sweetly upon my ear: 'Salvation by grace through faith; salvation by grace through faith!' The notes grew more tender and the words more interesting as the messenger came nearer. They fell upon my sad heart like dew upon the thirsty flowers. As the messenger passed by my lowly bed singing 'salvation by grace through faith; salvation by grace through faith!' I put forth the trembling hand of faith; I took firm hold upon the rich and glorious promises; the burden of sin and guilt was lifted from my heart; my soul swelled with such ecstasy of joy that it burst its prison house of clay, and, mounting on high, I was borne on angels' wings to the Paradise of God." But hark to his shouts of gladness; they are not words of praise of his own works or of his own merits, but joyful thanksgiving to God and the Lamb for this great salvation. He gives all the glory for his wonderful deliverance to Jesus and Him crucified, the Savior of sinners.

III. THIS SALVATION IS GLORIOUS.

Sacrifices are necessary on the part of man that salvation may be experienced, but it more than compensates for them all. It is "profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come."

1. It is salvation from the guilt and condemna-

tion of sin. He that comes to God by faith, he that accepts of Jesus as his Savior, receives pardon for all his sins. Divine condemnation is withdrawn, the conscience of sin is removed, and there is imparted to the heart peace with God and the blessed assurance of adoption into His family. The joy of this gracious change is inexpressible and full of comfort.

2. It is salvation from the power and the dominion of sin. The heart is made new. Its natural impurity is taken away. Desire and affection and hope rise to things above. The blood of Jesus cleanseth from all sin. The soul that was spiritually dead is quickened by the grace of God; it no longer walketh "according to the course of the world," nor is led by "the spirit that worketh in the hearts of the children of disobedience," but, filled with Divine life and love, traces with delight the highway of holiness, the path that grows brighter and brighter unto the perfect day.

3. It is salvation from the last effects of sin. Not only has man incurred guilt and condemnation on account of sin; not only has his moral nature been made impure and unholy, but the introduction of sin into the world has been the cause, doubtless, of all physical pain and bodily suffering. Every disease that preys upon the human flesh is begotten of sin. Every sick-bed has been prepared by sin. Every death scene has been created by sin. Every shroud has been woven by sin. Every grave has been dug by sin. Because of sin man became mortal and the earth a vast graveyard. Because of sin

every human form bears marks prophetic of death, and around every family circle are grief, and broken ties of love, and deep weeds of mourning. O, how cruel has sin been to man! But, thank God, his scepter shall not always be triumphant. Good news is announced from heaven. Salvation by grace has been provided, Salvation from the last effects of sin. Jesus has come, a full, a complete Savior. He not only purchased our pardon on Calvary, He not only provided sanctifying power in sending the Holy Comforter, but standing by the grave of those who loved Him He cries out, "I am the resurrection and the life." A brighter morning will dawn by and by; then every tomb shall be uncovered, then every saint sleeping in Christ will hear the voice of the Son of God, and come forth to everlasting life, saved from the last effects of sin.

Very early in life the glad news of this salvation fell upon my ears, and its gracious power touched my heart. Realizing my great need, I bowed at the mercy-seat, while tears of deep penitence flowed from my eyes. Earnest prayers were offered in my behalf; earnest Christians told me to look to Jesus, the sinners' Friend, for help. My own dear mother held me in her arms, and, mingling her tears with mine, encouragingly said, "Believe in Jesus, He can save." But faith was too weak to lay hold upon the promise. She still spoke words of encouragement, saying, "Believe in Jesus; He is willing to save." Repeating to me the precious promises of the Gospel, she said, "Believe in Jesus; He saves

now." Letting go of all else, my faith rested alone upon Him "who loved me and gave Himself for me." The load of guilt was rolled from my heart, assurance of pardon was imparted to my soul, and the joyful words fell from my lips, "A sinner saved by grace!" Since that glad hour many showers of mercy have fallen upon me, many seasons of refreshing have been experienced; often I have been permitted from Pisgah's heights, by faith, to view the promised land; yet the joyful sentiment of my heart has ever been, "A sinner saved by grace!" Looking forward to the closing hours of life, the unbidden desire has arisen that the final summons should come to me at home, that loved ones should be near to wipe the death-sweat from my brow and "sing to me of heaven when I am called to die." Whether this shall be so or not, or even if I have to lean my head upon a stone in the wilderness when life is passing away, it will not matter, if then with full triumph I am enabled to say, "A sinner saved by grace!" And then, on the other shore, as I meet the loved ones gone on before, as with them I survey the fields of eternal bliss, as I mingle with that glorious company who "have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb," I will ever sing, "A sinner saved by grace!" It is a glorious salvation. The storehouse of God's grace is full, and all by faith may realize its saving power.

"Its streams the whole creation reach,
So plenteous is the store;
Enough for all, enough for each,
Enough for evermore."

VI.

THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST.

“But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept.”—I COR. XV, 20.

THE plan of salvation is Divine. It was Divinely conceived, Divinely revealed, and Divinely completed. Its wise adaptation to the nature and condition of man, and its perfect harmony with the attributes of God, are proof of its Divine origin. Its very conception implies Divine wisdom, its bountiful provisions of saving mercy could only emanate from Divine love. Its revelation to the world, the unfolding of this wonderful scheme, was by Divine inspiration. And the act of its completion—the resurrection of Christ—was performed by Divine power. The whole scheme of human redemption bears the impress of Divinity.

In all its parts it excites deepest thought, supremest wonder, and inexpressible joy. The Christian hears with gladness the chorus of the angels announcing the birth of Christ. He follows with increasing interest the steps of Jesus as He delivers to the people His message of mercy, and performs

in Judea His wonderful works. He views with tearful sadness the humiliation of Christ, His rejection, His poverty, and His ignominious death upon the cross, but with a heart throbbing with unspeakable delight he hails the Savior rising from the tomb, having conquered death and obtained victory over the grave; and without fear and without doubting he unites with the apostle in his confident exultation, "But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept." This truth inspires his heart with joy, makes stronger his faith, and gives new life and new vigor to his hopes.

The resurrection of Christ is presented by the apostle for our earnest thought and as an admonition to constant faith.

I. THE NECESSITY OF HIS RESURRECTION.

The importance of this fact is seen in its vital connection with the salvation of man. The plan of redemption was only completed when Jesus arose from the dead. Saving faith necessarily implies the acceptance of this truth. A denial of the resurrection of Christ is a rejection of the whole plan of Gospel salvation.

1. It was necessary in order that prophecy might be fulfilled in Jesus Christ as the Messiah. The seers of old, in speaking of the coming of the Messiah, of the works that He would perform, and the life He would live, also predicted His resurrection from the dead. In his Song the inspired Psalmist

represents the Messiah as saying, "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, nor suffer thy Holy One to see corruption." Although His death is implied in these words, yet His soul was not to remain in the place of departed spirits, nor was His body to molder to dust in the grave; or, in other words, He would be raised to life. Jesus foretold His own resurrection. "The Son of man," said He, "must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders and chief priests, and be slain, and be raised the third day." It was necessary that He should arise to fulfill the words of prophecy as well as His own predictions, and thereby give proof that He was the Messiah.

2. It was necessary that He should arise from the dead that man might have the knowledge of pardon for sin. Jesus, when about to be taken away from His disciples, told them that He would not leave them comfortless, but would send the Comforter, who should abide with them forever. It is doubtless to this work that the apostle refers when he says that Jesus "rose for our justification." Had He not risen, this promise could not have been fulfilled. The joy and peace of conscious pardon, and the consolation derived from communion with God, are the blessed results of the coming of the Comforter sent by the risen Christ.

3. It was necessary that He should arise that we might have a pledge, a proof, and a pattern of our own resurrection. He became "the firstfruits of them that slept." On the third day after the feast

of the Passover the law required the Jew to bring, as his offering, a sheaf as the firstfruits of the coming harvest. This sheaf was proof that a harvest was at hand, and it also was a sample of the harvest to be gathered. Jesus by His resurrection became the "firstfruits of them that slept." Others had been brought to life from the dead, but they all died again; He arose to die no more. As the "firstfruits" gave proof of a coming harvest, His resurrection was a pledge and proof of the resurrection of His saints. His risen body, all immortal and glorious, was a sure prophecy of the glorious bodies with which His saints should come forth in the resurrection morning. The hope and assurance of that joyful day is founded upon the triumph of Christ. The sadness of the hour of separation is relieved, the sting of death is extracted, and for all His dying saints He becomes the resurrection and the life. He is the "firstfruits" of a glorious harvest.

II. THE CERTAINTY OF THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST FROM THE DEAD. The apostle speaks of it as a fact; "but now is Christ risen from the dead."

The important truth announced in these words is presented, not only as an object of faith, but of certain knowledge. It is the foundation truth of all Christian doctrine. It is the keystone in the arch of man's salvation. He that is without the knowledge of this fact knows not God in the pardon of

sin. If there is uncertainty about this fact, then the Christian religion is uncertain. If the resurrection of Christ is a fiction, then Gospel provisions and Gospel promises all prove to be a fiction. Remove this foundation truth, and the whole Christian fabric falls to the ground.

It is no wonder that the enemies of Christianity have tried to their utmost to surround this fact with a cloud of uncertainty. Its miraculous nature, its proof of the presence of Divine power, its convincing influence upon the minds of men of the truthfulness of the Gospel religion, have made it the especial object of attack by the forces of unbelief. If they succeed in their effort in making uncertain the resurrection of Christ, their triumph is complete. If they can remove this keystone the arch of Christianity will fall, and man is left without hope of salvation in Christ. The question, therefore, is of vital importance, Did Christ arise from the tomb? Is it a fact beyond contradiction? Is it a matter of certain knowledge? Our salvation depends upon this knowledge. Our hope of heaven rests upon this fact. We must know it to be the truth.

The Christian's heart rejoices to be assured that the resurrection of Christ is proven by evidence the most clear and decisive. No other historical fact is more fully attested. No other historical event is established by more credible testimony. And this testimony, after the most thorough examination and critical scrutiny, both by the friends and the enemies

of the Christian religion, stands unshaken and perfectly conclusive.

1. The admission of the enemies of Jesus is presumptive proof. These admissions were made at the time when the event took place. The Roman soldiers who had been appointed to watch the sepulcher, and especially to guard against any deception, after the wonderful occurrences of the third morning, "came into the city and showed unto the chief priests all the things that were done." The leaders of the Jews could not deny their statements, but persuaded them to make a different report, giving them money to say, "His disciples came by night and stole Him away while we slept." The chief priests admitted that Jesus had been raised from the dead, but hoped by bribery and falsehood to deceive the people. It is also said that, in a letter written by Pilate, the Roman governor, he speaks of the fact of Christ's resurrection, and expresses his wonder and surprise at the strange occurrence. The first report of the affrighted sentinels, the evident admission of the fact by the chief priests, and their weak effort to give currency to a different story, form a strong presumption that Jesus arose from the dead.

2. The large number of persons who declared that they had seen Jesus alive after His death increases this presumption. The number of witnesses to any alleged fact always affects the probability of its truthfulness. The testimony of only one witness in the courts very often determines the de-

cision of the case. But let two or more witnesses bear testimony to the same fact, as the number of witnesses increases the probability is increased that their testimony is true. The guilt or innocence of a man charged with crime, or the establishment of the title to earthly possessions, would be determined by the corroborative evidence given by them. The risen Savior was seen by many. A large number of His disciples said they saw Him and conversed with Him after His resurrection. Mary was saluted by Him at the door of the sepulcher on the third morning. The two disciples who walked in sadness towards Emmaus were made glad when Jesus joined their company and made Himself known in the breaking of bread. The eleven disciples met in an upper room in Jerusalem, were first startled with fear, and then filled with joy, when He appeared in their midst. The apostle in this letter asserts that more than five hundred persons, the most of them then living, had seen the risen Savior. The fact was made known in the city near which His dead body had been laid in the sepulcher, and to multitudes who doubtless had cried out, "Crucify Him!" It is the testimony of not one witness only; and the testimony of so many to the same fact makes strong the presumption that Jesus arose from the dead.

3. The testimony borne by the disciples of Christ is credible. It affords certain knowledge of the fact of His resurrection. There is not only strong presumptive proof derived from the confessions of His

enemies and the statements of the large number of His disciples, but the testimony given by His disciples is convincing beyond doubt. The candid manner in which they bear their testimony, the exactness with which they corroborate each other, and the fearful danger to which they exposed themselves for publishing the fact, all give conclusive proof that what they stated was the truth.

The chief effort of infidelity has been to destroy the credibility of these witnesses to the resurrection of Christ. But its shrewdest efforts to accomplish this have failed; its keenest shafts have fallen to the ground. The noted argument of Hume, the ablest of the opponents of Christianity, is inconclusive and full of fallacies. He very confidently and ingeniously presents his argument. It is contrary, he says, to human experience that a miracle should be wrought or that a dead man should be brought to life; but it is in accordance with human experience that men testify falsely. We must therefore conclude, he contends, that the disciples of Christ did not speak the truth in saying that they had seen Jesus alive after He had been put to death, and that Christ did not arise from the dead. By this grand sweep of his logic, this infidel writer attempts to destroy the credibility of the witnesses to the resurrection of Christ, and to cause the world to believe that, instead of being a wonderful fact, it was only a delusive fiction. But by careful examination of his argument it will be found that his premises are far from the truth and his conclusion supremely fallacious.

Take the first premise of his argument, that it is "contrary to human experience" that a dead person should be raised to life." This expression "contrary to human experience" means either contrary to *our* experience or else contrary to the experience of *all mankind*. If it is meant that the raising to life of a dead man, or looking upon a man who has been brought to life from the dead is contrary to our experience, we may very readily admit that this is true, and yet such an event may have really occurred. Many things have taken place in the history of the world which we may not have experienced. We never looked upon the person of an Alexander, a Cæsar, or a Washington, and yet we believe and know that they lived and performed illustrious deeds among mankind. We never, it may be, saw the land of China, and yet we have no doubt of its existence. We never experienced the volcanic eruptions of Vesuvius or Pelée, that destroyed the cities at the base of those mountains, yet we know these events occurred. So we may never have looked upon the glorious form of a risen Savior, or experienced His resurrection from the dead, yet that is no proof that the disciples did not have such an experience, nor does it detract from the credibility of their testimony. Again, if the expression used by the infidel writer means that it is "contrary to *all* human experience" that a dead man should be brought to life, or be seen alive after he arose from the dead, then we reply that this is not argument at all, it is bare assertion. The question at

issue is, Did the disciples of Christ have such an experience? They asserted that they had seen and conversed with Jesus after his death and resurrection. The determination of the question, therefore, depends upon their credibility. Did they testify to the truth, or did they testify falsely?

Their credibility is fully established when we consider the fact that it is in accordance with all human experience that men placed in such circumstances as were the disciples of Christ, always testify to the truth and the truth only. Every earthly incentive was present with them either to refrain from testifying at all or to tell a different story. There was no promise of worldly gain for stating that they had seen the risen Savior. The story they told was unpopular, and its publication arrayed against them the multitudes around them. They were commanded by those in authority not to preach a risen Savior. They were threatened with the confiscation of their goods, with banishment from their homes, with many stripes, with imprisonment, and even with death, if they persisted in bearing such testimony. Had the story they told been a fiction, had it been untrue that they had seen Jesus alive after His death, in the face of such dangers they would have ceased testifying to it as a fact. But they conferred not with flesh and blood; they obeyed not the commands of men in high places or the demands of mobs; they faltered not in the face of persecution, at the opening of prison doors, and even at the stake, to preach a risen Savior, to declare

that they had seen Him alive after He had been put to death upon the cross. At all times and in all places they testified to the resurrection of Christ. Testimony given under such circumstances can not be doubted; it must have been the truth. You take a case in one of the courts of the land. Let a man be charged with having committed murder, and be arraigned at the bar of the court. Let the multitude of spectators be in full sympathy with him, when the witnesses are called to give their testimony, let the court warn them against saying anything that would imply his guilt. Let the judge inform them that if they testify that this man committed murder they will be heavily fined, they will be despoiled of their property, they will be cast into prison, and if they persist in saying that he is guilty they will be put to death—that they must not attempt to involve this man in a criminal act. But if these witnesses, having heard all these warnings and beholding the officers of the law standing ready to do the bidding of the judge, if they still unitedly state that they saw the man strike the fatal blow and willfully and maliciously take the life of his fellow-man, their testimony would merit the confidence of all men. Who could doubt the words of witnesses bearing such testimony under such circumstances? What jury would fail to find the man guilty? Infidel as well as Christian men would accept such testimony as conclusive of the man's guilt, and declare that he justly merited the full penalty of the law. It is contrary to all human experience that

men will testify falsely in the face of such surroundings. The disciples of Christ met with bitter opposition because they declared that Christ was risen from the dead; cruel mobs attacked them. The officers of the law made no effort to defend them, but bade them to cease preaching a risen Christ. They encountered fearful persecution. They were cast into prison. They were bound with fetters of iron to the stake. They were threatened with death in its most cruel form if they did not cease bearing this testimony. They could have gone free and escaped all these perils if they had ceased preaching a risen Christ. But in the midst of angry multitudes they testified that Jesus was risen. As they entered the creaking doors of dungeon cells they testified that Jesus was risen. From the grated windows of loathsome prisons they shouted that Jesus was risen. From the flames of the stake and while suffering death they still testified that Jesus was risen. They plainly declared that they had seen the Crucified One after He had arisen from the grave, and had heard Him speak comforting words. Such testimony must be true. It is marked with the fullest credibility. No historical fact rests on stronger evidence than does the resurrection of Christ. No witnesses bear more credible testimony than do the disciples of Jesus. Their faithfulness to the truth, their readiness to declare it, their willingness to suffer for its sake, make them noble examples of Christian courage and Christian fidelity. All true lovers of Christ should strive to imitate them in their steadfastness.

Some may come with the objection to the effectiveness of the testimony of the disciples, and say that some men will die for opinion's sake when their opinions are wrong, and that such may have been the case with these disciples. But we reply that they did not suffer for the sake of an opinion, but for testifying to the knowledge of a fact. If the resurrection of Christ had been a fiction instead of a fact, they would readily have ceased to tell the story of the resurrection of Jesus, and thereby escaped all danger. Men may now and then publish what they know to be untrue, but they will not undergo danger and suffering in testifying to it as a fact.

4. The resurrection of Christ is proven to-day to be a fact by living witnesses. Jesus promised His disciples that he would send the Comforter. The Holy Spirit could only be sent by a living Christ. That promise has been verified. It is the blessed experience of men in all parts of the earth that the Holy Comforter has come and imparted to penitent hearts a knowledge of the forgiveness of sin; that He has come and given clear assurance of adoption into the family of God; that He has come and bestowed pentecostal showers upon the followers of Jesus. Wherever a sinner is convicted for sin the Spirit is there sent by a risen Christ. Wherever a soul is made conscious of the removal of guilt and the establishment of peace in the heart, the Spirit is there sent by a risen Christ. Wherever a child of God is made perfect in faith and love, the Spirit

is there sent by the living risen Christ. Witnesses to this foundation truth of the Christian religion may be found in every land. Christ formed within their hearts the hope of glory enables them with blessed assurance to say, "Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept." The Comforter has been sent, and all may have certain knowledge that Christ is risen. The admissions of the enemies of Jesus, the large number of witnesses to the resurrection of Christ, their well-established credibility, and the presence and saving influence of the Holy Spirit upon the hearts of men, form a logical conclusion that can not be successfully controverted. They fully establish the fact that Christ arose from the dead.

III. THE GLORY OF CHRIST'S RESURRECTION.

The pages of the world's history contain no event more interesting and more wonderful than the resurrection of Christ. No other fact so thrillingly touches the human heart; no other truth so powerfully influences human character and human destiny. Turning from the world's busy scene, go look upon the sepulcher on the third morning and witness the glorious resurrection of the Savior of men. Multitudes gather around that tomb. The Roman soldiers guard the sepulcher where the body of Jesus rests. They have stood at their posts undisturbed through the long hours of the dark night. Around them assemble the scribes and chief priests, at whose demand Jesus was crucified; they pass by, wagging their heads and exulting in the work they

have done. There come also the hosts of evil flocking from the world of darkness, boasting that they have overcome the Son of God and locked in the grave the body of the Messiah, the hope of man's salvation. In the distance may be seen standing the good of all ages, looking with tearful eyes upon the place where the body of Jesus lies. Above them hover the angelic bands that lifted their glad voices in chorus and song when Jesus was born; but now their lips are silent and their harps are unstrung. Heaven, earth, and hell gaze with intensest interest and silent wonder upon the scene. Just as the first rays of morning light fall upon the brow of Olivet the earth trembles beneath, an angel arrayed in white descends from heaven and lights upon the tomb. The stone is rolled away from the door of the sepulcher. The Roman sentinels fall as dead men to the ground. The scribes and chief priests hasten away in terror; the damned spirits from the world of woe, clanking their chains in fear, flee back to their native hell, and Jesus, by an exercise of His own Divine power, bursts the bonds of death asunder, breaks down the bars of the tomb, and rises in triumph from the dead. See Him as He comes forth in victory, having bound captive to His chariot wheels Death, Hell, and the Grave. The voices of the angels fall like sweet perfume upon the morning air, shouting aloud, "Jesus is risen!" Mary takes up the glad refrain right by the door of the empty sepulcher, and returns to the city, joyfully singing, "Jesus is risen!" The wondering

disciples brush away their tears of grief, and go forth boldly proclaiming that "Jesus is risen!" From hill to vale, from mountain-top to spreading plain, all over Palestina and Asia Minor, the tidings are swiftly borne, "Jesus is risen!" Throughout the Roman Empire, on every continent, and in every island of the sea, the proclamation is heard, "Jesus is risen!" And ere long the bright day will doubtless dawn when every nation and people and tongue will join the triumphant shout, "But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept."

When but a boy, in the shady grove where God's people had pitched their tents to engage in prayer and songs of praise, the joyful fact of a risen Savior was first experienced by my own young heart. Then first I felt its life-giving power. Along life's pathway, over its rugged mountains, through its sandy wastes, and across its streams of trouble, this truth has been my pillar of fire by night and pillar of cloud by day. As the sight of the eye grows dim, as the members of the body grow feeble before the infirmities of old age, a risen Savior imparts good cheer to my heart, new strength to my powers, new hopes to my soul. Through the remaining days of this life and throughout the cycles of eternity my chief joy shall be to praise and adore a risen Savior. The resurrection of Christ! Glorious truth! The grandest theme that can employ the mind and tongue of men on earth or fill the song of angels in heaven. May it ever be our chief delight to know and tell that Christ is risen!

VII.

INDIVIDUAL DUTY.

“Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?”—ACTS
IX, 6.

IN this earnest inquiry of Saul of Tarsus there is a clear recognition of God's will as the rule of human conduct. Incentives to action among men are various. Some men act merely from prejudice or early habit. As their fathers did, so do they,—engaging in the same business, living according to the same customs, and entertaining the same opinions. Some men are controlled chiefly by the desire of worldly gain. In their plans and efforts to get wealth and to enlarge their possessions, the question of right or wrong is not allowed to have any influence upon their minds. Some men are prompted to act by whatever promises personal pleasure. Their whole effort is to gain that which will gratify the lust of their eye and the appetites and passions of their bodies. Other men are led by the spirit of ambition. To gain positions of influence, to obtain social or political power, to write their names high on the scroll of fame, they are ready to sacrifice every principle of right, and to ignore all the behests of true manhood. But Saul

of Tarsus, arrested on his way to Damascus by the hand of that Jesus whose cause he was zealously persecuting, prostrated to the ground by the power of God, realizing his utter helplessness, "trembling and astonished," cries out, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" Hitherto he had chosen his own work; hitherto he had yielded to the impulses of his own evil nature and the dictates of his own will; hitherto, as a proud Pharisee and an intolerant Jew, he had devoted all his energies to the persecution of the disciples of Christ, and was now on his way to engage in the same cruel work at Damascus; but he is suddenly startled by an unseen Power; he is deeply convicted of sin by the wonderful display of the Divine presence; and he bows his will submissively to the will of God and seeks to know what work the Lord would have him do.

The question of Saul of Tarsus had primary reference to what he should do in order to obtain God's pardoning favor. He was convinced of his error, he was convicted for sin, and now he anxiously inquires what he must do to obtain pardon. This is the earnest cry of every soul when brought to realize his lost condition. Conscious of guilt and trembling under condemnation, that is the most earnest inquiry, "What shall I do to be saved?" But this question of Saul, doubtless, has reference to more than personal salvation. It extends beyond the work of pardon for sin and his own adoption into the family of God. It evidently embraces his future life-work. In the past his hand had been

lifted up against the cause of Christ. He had pursued faithfully the traditions of Judaism. He had been enthusiastic in enforcing the teachings of Pharisaism. He had put forth every effort to destroy the infant Church of Christ. But now, convinced by the strong hand that was laid upon him that God disapproved of the work he was doing, he earnestly seeks to know the Divine will in reference to his future work. "What wilt Thou have me to do?" What is the work that I should do in order to make the world better? What is my mission in saving men and in extending a knowledge of the truth? It is to this thought, suggested by the text, that our attention is chiefly directed.

The question is not what ought to be done by the Church in order that men may be saved and the world freed from the bonds of sin. It is not what the ministers of the Gospel should do, and how they should or should not preach. Many persons might imagine that they were fully competent to solve that question. Nor is the question what should our neighbors do. There are those who are ever ready and willing to mark out the lines of duty for others. But the question is simply, what wilt Thou have me to do; me, the individual? as though no other one were living. What is my mission? Where is my post of duty? What is my part of the grand work of saving the world? This is an important question. It should receive the most earnest thought of every human heart.

I. EVERY INDIVIDUAL POSSESSES A POWER AND EXERTS AN INFLUENCE FOR GOOD OR FOR EVIL.

This fact is too often disregarded by men. We are too ready to depreciate the power wielded by a single person, to ignore the influence exerted by the individual. We accept as true the proverb that "In union there is strength." We are tempted to conclude that without union there is no strength; that alone we can do nothing. We are inclined to wait in the performance of duty till many persons are ready to unite with us in the work. We excuse ourselves from doing anything until the multitude around us are also engaged. But the important lesson is presented that the single person should be at work, whether others help or not. For each one possesses a power which he continually wields either for good or evil.

1. The truth of this proposition may be inferred from analogy. In the material world every atom of matter, whether great or small, exerts an influence upon every other atom. The wise tell us that the law of gravitation—of attraction and repulsion—is stamped upon all material things. By this unseen force the sun and all the planets exert an influence upon each other, and by it each one is guided in its orbit and controlled in its flight through space. If this earth, as a body of matter, sends out an influence to every sun and star in the heavens, then every particle of matter of which the earth is composed exerts its proportionate influence upon every other heavenly body. Therefore every grain of

sand upon the seashore and every mote floating in the evening sunbeam has something to do in controlling the movements of all suns and all worlds. No particle of matter exists without some influence; no atom but possesses a living, active force. If every atom of inanimate matter is endowed with such power, can we imagine that man composed of the spiritual and material is created without any influence? Shall we say that man, who possesses a soul that is immortal, a soul endowed with God-like reason, a soul that will live on when the stars cease to shine, a soul that shall sing the dirge at "nature's funeral pyre,"—that man has no influence, and possesses no power? No, there goes out from every individual, in word or act or life, an influence upon others, increasing their weal or woe; an influence that scatters beams of light or casts shadows of evil upon their pathways; an influence that helps to mold their characters and to shape their destinies for time and eternity. The material world about us clearly emphasizes the fact that "no man liveth unto himself."

2. This lesson is taught in the words of inspiration. Our Savior said to His disciples, "He that is not for us is against us; and he that gathereth not with us scattereth abroad." He refers to the individual; that man, that woman, that single person who is not exerting his influence for us is exerting his influence against us. Again He says, "Let your light so shine before men that they, seeing your good works, may glorify your Father in heaven."

This was not designed merely as an address to the whole Church or body of disciples, but it is a direct command to each one of the disciples. It is as if Jesus had said, "Peter, let your light shine; James, let your light shine; John, let your light shine before men," so that they may be led by your influence to glorify God. Again, the wise man a great while ago wrote, "One sinner destroyeth much good." Your observation and mine attests the correctness of that proverb. We see how much evil one sinner can accomplish, how much good one evil-doer can destroy. One turbulent person can keep in an uproar a whole community. One tattler can kindle to a flame the passions of a whole neighborhood. One saloon-keeper can impoverish the families, ruin the sons, and break the hearts of the mothers of a whole village. But if one sinner can destroy much good, it is also true that one good man can destroy much evil. He also possesses a power for the accomplishment of wonderful work. One active Christian, one pious life full of holy endeavors, one good man, can accomplish great good. He can overturn strongholds of iniquity, and lead on to glorious victory the forces of truth and right. Again, there comes all the way from the throne of God itself the assuring command, "Let him know that he that converteth a sinner from the error of his ways shall save a soul from death." God speaks in His Word to us as individuals. Every precept, every promise, every rich provision of grace, is for you or for me as an individual. Each one is addressed to us as

though there were none others to hear or be saved. It is to the individual, and of the individual, that the Bible speaks always and everywhere. It ever urges the wielding of the influence we possess for the good of our fellow men.

3. This lesson is impressively taught by the facts of real life around us. You may speak of public opinion and the power it possesses. It truly has a force that like a flood-tide sweeps all before it. We know that public opinion is powerful. We know that it is a difficult matter to attempt to row against its current. Few men are found who are brave enough to oppose its decisions. Some have now and then been found, when public opinion was wrong, who dared to oppose it even at the risk of their lives. But for them then to uphold the right required the noblest of heroism. Public opinion is powerful, but what is public opinion? Is it not the aggregate of individual opinions? Is it not the sentiment of a majority of the individuals composing a community? Some active, independent thinker has conceived and advanced the idea, and by industrious effort has molded like unto his own the sentiment of those around him, and has thus created that powerful force in society that we call public opinion. It is the creation of the individual.

Again, the laws of fashion are imperious and revolutionary. We see this fact clearly indicated in the frequent and universal changes of style in wearing apparel. Take, for instance, the cut of a man's coat, or the shape of a woman's bonnet. How

often the fashions change! With each new season come new fashions, and all voluntarily accept them. Very few persons are found who wish to be out of fashion. All are eager to note the first indications of a change and to follow the new modes. Even the most staid and sedate, those who preach to the younger people that it is wrong to follow the fashions, when they make purchase of new raiment for themselves, can not repress in their hearts the inquiry, if they do not express it with their lips, "Is this garment cut after the latest style?" The laws of fashion are constantly revolutionizing society, and their edicts dare not be ignored. Yet who makes these laws of fashion? They are not enacted by the legislature or congress. No mass conventions meet and ordain what shall be the mode of dress for the coming season. No; but some self-crowned queen, or some self-appointed dictator, from a throne established in some great commercial center, issues the mandate, prescribes the cut of the coat or the shape of the bonnet for the coming season, and all the people bow with alacrity to the command. It is the individual wielding a scepter more potent than that of prince or President.

The same fact is manifest in the home-circle. There the influence of the individual is most powerful. Who has not made note of the molding force of parental example upon the lives and characters of the children? In the pronunciation of words, in the tone of the voice, in the customs of life, in good or bad habits, how closely the children imitate their

parents! What the father does, be he rich or poor, is noble and right in the eyes of the boy. A mother's words of sympathy or advice are engraved upon the tablets of a child's heart. Her influence is felt by the child all through life. Her voice may even be hushed in death, yet her children will never forget her example; they will always feel the restraining and inspiring power of her love. How precious the thought: though mother is dead she yet speaketh! Great responsibility rests upon every parent. How important that such undying influence be so exerted that the children may be led by it into the path of righteousness and truth!

There are some persons, you will find, who, while they admit that they are able to exert some influence over others, yet claim that their influence is so small that they can do but little, if any, good. They excuse themselves with this plea from making any effort. They believe they only have a few talents, and neglect to put them to use. Much power for good in the Church is buried under this excuse. But God wants every one to be at work in His vineyard. Each one can do something. Each one is needed. Take a homely illustration: You go to a grocer to buy provisions for your household. The grocer places the goods you desire to purchase in one scale. In the other he puts a ten-pound weight; but he finds that the ten-pound weight is not enough to balance the goods. He gets the five and one pound weights and places them in the scale also. Yet he has not enough to determine the

weight of the goods. He now hunts up the half-ounce weight, and puts it in the scale with the ten, the five, and the one pound weights. The scales by the addition of the half-ounce weight are made to move, and the weight of your goods is determined. That half-ounce weight was really necessary in determining the exact weight. So in lifting this world up from sin and wickedness to purity and righteousness, in overcoming error and establishing truth among men, God not only wants the influence of men of ten talents, and five talents, and one talent; but if any one lives who can only wield a half-ounce of influence for good, he wants that half-ounce weight put into the Gospel scales.

There is an old tradition that a ship sailing upon the Western ocean was stranded on a reef near an island. All aboard the vessel worked hard for a length of time to get it off the reef, but failed. They then called to the men of the island to come with their cables and give them help. But the united effort of the ship's crew and men of the island failed to move the ship. Then the women of the island came also and took hold of the cables with the men, but the ship still hung upon the reef. At last the boys and girls of the island were also invited to help. The sailors of the vessel, the men and women of the island, and the boys and girls with them, took hold of the ropes, and as all pulled together, gradually the ship loosened her hold upon the reef and was soon sailing on her way to her desired harbor. The world has run upon the reef of

sin. There is need that every man who loves the truth, that every woman whose hope is in Christ, and every boy and girl who has learned the story of the cross, that all lay hold upon the cable of Gospel truth, and, working together, lift the world from the reef of sin and start it on the highway of holiness. There is no one without influence. God calls upon each one to work for the right.

II. THE WORK WHICH EACH ONE MAY DO.

A wide field for work for God is presented to those who would do His will. The vineyard is as extensive as is the human family, and many laborers are needed. Soon after the scales had fallen from the blinded eyes of Saul of Tarsus and his heart had found rest by believing in Christ, he entered zealously upon his mission of preaching the Gospel to Jew and Gentile. It may not be the duty of each one, like Paul, to become an apostle, but no less important work is to be done.

1. Each one by earnest prayer may help in doing good and saving men. Some may not have a talent for preaching, or for singing, or for giving much, yet every one can pray, and in prayer voice the world's wants before God. And prayer is a powerful agency for good. Prayer "moves the arm that moves the universe." Prayer obtains help Divine in overcoming evil. Prayer secures the presence of God to aid in establishing in the hearts of men the kingdom of righteousness and truth. "The effectual fervent prayer of the righteous man availeth much."

2. Each one by words of kindness may lead others to the truth. Kind words do not cost anything. They are a blessing to those who utter them, and also to those who hear them. They gain the good will of those about us, and impress them with the excellency of the truth. They are an effective means of calming the turbulent passions of the human heart; of leading young and old to reverence that which is right and to accept of the offers of salvation. The experience of every one attests the power of words of kindness. Very early in life I realized this fact. When a small boy, my father's home in the country was very often visited by the ministers of the Gospel who regularly held religious service there. Among the many who came for that purpose was a plain, unordained local preacher. This man won my boyish love and highest esteem. I prized his visits and his preaching more than all the rest. He was my beau-ideal of a preacher then, and he still holds a favorite place in my memory. It was not because his sermons were more logical or his preaching more eloquent than that of others. It was simply on account of the kind words with which he always greeted me and the tender regard he manifested at every visit. His kindness led me to esteem him highly, and to love the message which he brought with him. Kind words fall upon the heart like refreshing dew upon the opening flowers, and awaken it to new life and new love.

3. Each one by kind deeds may lead men to Christ. There are those around us who scarcely

ever enter a sanctuary or listen to the voice of a preacher. A man may become so intense in his opposition to Gospel truth that his hatred would be aroused against any one who might speak to him about his soul's salvation. His heart may be barred against all approach of the messengers of the truth, his ears may be closed to all invitations of mercy; but a kind deed in time of trouble, a loaf of bread when he is hungry, a cup of water when he is thirsty, a helping hand when he is in greatest need, will unlock the door of his heart so that you may enter in, and with you take Jesus and His glorious salvation. The good works and alms-deeds of Dorcas for the widows of Joppa, while she was alive, so inspired their hearts with love and Peter's soul with faith, that, in answer to their united prayers, she was raised to life from the dead. Kind deeds possess a life-giving power.

4. Each one may aid in extending a knowledge of the truth. There is need of more extended publication of the Gospel provisions. Many people are yet to be found in the darkness of sin. Tribes and nations are yet without a knowledge of the true God; even in Christian lands, and under the sound of Church-going bells you may find whole families who know and care but little about the way of salvation. There is need that some one tell them of Jesus and His love. Although not ordained as a minister of the Gospel, although you may not be called to preach from the pulpit, you may help in making known the truth. You may preach by the wayside.

You may spread the light of saving grace in the regions of darkness and sin. You may tell the good news of salvation wherever the lost is found. Thus you may become an efficient agency in building up the kingdom of God and in bringing men to a knowledge of saving mercy.

It is said that a lighthouse was erected on a rocky island a little way from the mainland. A man was stationed in it to attend to lighting its lamp whenever the shades of night fell upon the waters around. Dangerous breakers rolled on every side. Ships sailing that way in the darkness were in danger of being wrecked. One afternoon the keeper of the lighthouse was called to the shore on business, and failed to return before night came on. He had left his little boy in the lighthouse. That boy saw the darkness approaching, and knew that the lamp should be lit. But what could he do? Although a small boy he resolved to make the attempt to light the lamp as his father always did. He ascended to the chamber where the lamp was hanging, but his arms were too short to reach the lamp. Still he would not give up the effort. He drew from the corner of the room a table, then got upon the table, and yet he was unable to reach the lamp. He then hunted up an old stool and placed it upon the table. Then, standing on the stool on top of the table, he reached up and lit the lamp. Just as its bright light shone out over the waters, a ship was seen nearing the breakers. The pilot took warning from the lamp lit in the lighthouse, turned the course of the

vessel, and all aboard were saved from a fearful shipwreck. Many immortal souls around us are exposed to eternal danger from the breakers of sin. Kindle the light in the Gospel lighthouse. Let its bright beams shine out over the breakers around, that they may take warning of danger near and be saved from death.

A prosperous and able lawyer, who for years had paid no attention to a religious life, indeed had become quite a skeptic, was converted to Christianity and became a useful member of the Church. The preacher in whose pastorate the man was brought to Christ had just closed a series of lectures against skepticism and in favor of the Christian religion. He was greatly delighted to see the marked change in the lawyer's faith and life. In an ecstasy of joy he went to the converted man, and, after warmly congratulating him on the change, requested him to tell him what was the chief means of his conviction and conversion. Which one of the lectures that had been delivered had convinced him of his error, and what argument in that lecture was the cause of the blessed result? The converted man, with a smile upon his countenance, made his reply. "It was not," he said, "your excellent lectures that led me to give up my unbelief. It was not any argument in those lectures that produced my conviction. I had an argument for each one of your arguments. I arrayed my logic against your logic, and thought I was secure in my conclusions." "Tell me, then," said the disappointed

preacher, "the cause of your change." The converted man answered: "One day, as I descended the steps of the church after the close of your lecture, right by my side, old auntie, an old colored woman, was going down the steps, and by a misstep seemed ready to fall. I helped her a little, and saved her from falling. When she reached the last step, with a grateful smile upon her wrinkled face and kindly tears in her eyes, she looked up to me and said, 'Thank you, massa; do you love Jesus, my blessed Massa?' The question was spoken in a tender voice. It took me by surprise, and strangely troubled my mind. I turned away from her, and tried to look upon the words as those only of a half-witted old colored woman. But the question followed me. At every step I took as I walked up the street some strange power seemed to enforce the inquiry, 'Do you love Jesus, the blessed Master?' I was so much troubled that at last I concluded I would go to my office and remain there until the strange impression was gone and the words had been forgotten. But as I opened the door and entered my office the question with still more thrilling effect fell upon my heart: 'Do you love Jesus, the blessed Master?' Right there and then my unbelief gave way, and, falling upon my knees, I bowed my will to the Divine will, and now I can joyfully say, 'Yes, I love Jesus, my blessed Savior.'" The feeblest of God's servants possess an influence, and it can be successfully used in the salvation of men.

III. THE INCENTIVES TO DO GOD'S WILL ARE STRONG AND WITHOUT NUMBER.

The agencies of evil are busy always. They rest not, day nor night, in wrong-doing. By their influence men are led astray, unholy passions are aroused, ruinous habits are formed, and multitudes are led onward to the brink of ruin. Old and young are ensnared by sin, and are held captive in the meshes of evil. How much more active, how much more zealous should the children of God be! Eternal interests are at stake; eternal destinies are involved. Every lover of the truth should be earnestly at work that the agencies of evil might be destroyed and the world saved.

The man who does God's will has promise of a rich reward. He who spends his life in performing good deeds gains the applause of his fellow-men. When he dies his works do follow him. His name is enshrined in grateful memories, and the world makes fragrant with flowers the spot where his body rests. His good deeds will form for him a monument more lasting than marble, one that will not decay before the passing ages. His work for the truth will send out a wave of influence for the right to coming generations, and all people will pronounce blessings upon him.

But a more glorious reward awaits those who work for God. "Henceforth," says the apostle, "there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day; and to all that love his appearing." We

may with glad hearts view by faith that coronation-day. How impressive the surroundings, how glorious the scene! Joy kindles in the eyes of all of God's saints. The redeemed draw near with rejoicings, each one to obtain his eternal reward. From the ranks of the blood-washed throng I see one advancing to receive his portion. He is clothed in a white robe and a glittering crown awaits his coming. "Who is this," I inquire, "that is worthy of such a reward?" The answer is given: "This was a faithful preacher of the Gospel of Christ, an active leader of the hosts of the Lord, a successful instrumentality in the conversion of souls." I hear the loving voice of the Judge as He places the crown upon his brow, saying, "Well done, good and faithful servant; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." Then another approaches, arrayed in white, to receive his reward. I ask: "Who is this? Another successful minister of the Gospel, another eloquent preacher of the truth?" The answer comes back: "No; this was a lay member in the Church of God. He was a faithful steward of worldly goods. He possessed a talent for accumulating wealth, and always had an open hand for bestowing charity. He helped to build houses of worship; he aided in support of God's messengers; he fed the poor; he clothed the naked; he was a friend to the needy; his life was consecrated to deeds of benevolence." A crown is placed on his head and the Judge pronounces the words, "Well done, good and faithful servant; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." But

there comes another, clothed in just as white raiment, and to receive just as bright a crown. I ask, "Who is this that is to obtain so rich a reward; another Gospel preacher, or another benevolent man of wealth?" "No!" the reply is made. "This one was a poor widow, whose humble home stood on one of the back alleys of civilization. She trained her fatherless children to love God; she spoke words of comfort to the sorrowing; she made known to the poor the riches of redeeming mercy; she did what she could to make the world better." I see the Judge place upon her brow a glittering crown, and hear Him say to her also, "Well done good and faithful servant; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

For each one who does the will of God there is a crown, and a white robe, and palms of victory. There is a crown for you and a crown for me in that great day, if we prove faithful in this life. To each one will be extended the joyful greeting, "Well done good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things; I will make thee ruler over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

VIII.

BALM IN GILEAD.

“Is there no balm in Gilead; is there no physician there? why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?”—JER. VIII, 22.

THE land of Gilead formed the northeastern portion of the country possessed by the tribes of Israel. Its mountains were anciently noted for the production of spices and myrrh and balm. This balm was highly prized as a healing remedy, not only by the inhabitants of the country, but also by surrounding tribes and nations. It was sold by merchantmen even in the markets of Egypt. Its curative power was so well known that it became a very popular medicine. When any one was found suffering with the ailments to which it was applied, it was naturally asked, “Why is he allowed to suffer when this balm will restore him to health?” It became a proverbial exclamation when such sickness occurred, “Is there no balm in Gilead; is there no physician there? why then is not the sick restored to health?” The prophet uses the same proverb in regard to the national troubles which threatened his people. The children of Israel had become forgetful of the God of their fathers, and had violated his commands. Their sins had been

numerous, and God's judgments were about to fall upon them. The Assyrian army had invaded their land. The snorting of the war horse was heard from Dan. The whole country trembled at the tramp of the hosts of the enemy. Cities and villages were being laid waste, and utter overthrow threatened the tribes of Israel. The prophet inquires, "Why this national distress? why this fearful disease that has stricken the body politic?" And in the form of a question he asserts that "There is balm in Gilead; there is a physician there," and asks, "Why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?" The prophet forcibly tells the people the reason why this trouble had come upon them. They had forgotten God; they had become worshipers of idols; they had committed abominations, and refused to turn away from their sins. There is a God in Israel, but the people have denied Him; there is balm in Gilead and a physician there, but the people have neglected them; and now fearful destruction was their just punishment.

The land of Israel and the condition of the Jewish people at the time of the prophet are typical of the world to-day. The darkness of heathenism prevails in many portions of the earth. Superstition controls many tribes and peoples. The shrines of Mohammed have many devotees. Buddhism and Brahmanism count their adherents by the thousands. Even in countries professedly Christian, intemperance and infidelity abound. Violations of law, both

human and Divine, are frequent, wickedness runs riot both in high places and low; thefts, strife, and murders are of daily occurrence. The paths of sin are thronged by those who live without thought of God or fear of His displeasure. Even now the prophetic eye may already see dark clouds of Divine wrath gathering along the horizon; the prophetic ear may hear the muttering thunder of God's judgments that overshadow evil doers, and the heart of all may well tremble with fear for the fate of those who recklessly live in sin. Why is the world in such a sad condition? The Gospel of Christ has been preached for nearly twenty centuries; why is not the world saved? Is Christianity a failure? Is the religion of Christ unequal to the task of overcoming sin and of lifting up fallen man? "Is there no balm in Gilead; is there no physician there? why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?"

This is a question which should interest every Christian heart. Its solution should awaken earnest thought and the closest investigation.

I. THE TEXT, IN THE FORM OF AN INQUIRY, ASSERTS A GLORIOUS FACT. THERE IS IN THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST A SUFFICIENCY OF PROVISION, PURPOSE, AND POWER FOR THE SALVATION OF THE WHOLE WORLD. There is balm in Gilead; there is a physician there; and these are fully equal to the wants of man.

The work of saving the world is one of vast magnitude. To overcome the strongholds of in-

iquity; to shed light upon the dark regions of heathenism; to reclaim the sons of men from superstition and error; to abolish all corruption and crime from among men; to establish in the human heart peace and joy and hope; to make all men new creatures, requires more than human wisdom and human power. The leprosy of sin prevails everywhere, is infectious in its nature and deadly in its tendencies; yet in the provisions of the Gospel of Christ, in its purpose and its power, we find an antidote sufficient to impart spiritual health to the whole world.

1. In Christianity is found an all-wise Physician—one who knows the nature of man's malady, and who can prescribe a remedy for his healing.

A physician, to be successful in the practice of his profession, must be able to determine, from the symptoms of his patient, the disease with which he is suffering. Without this knowledge he will be unable to prescribe a remedy that would insure a cure. Different diseases require different treatments. A medicine that would relieve one complaint might only aggravate another. The wise physician first determines what the disease is; then he is prepared to prescribe the remedy. A doctor was once asked what course he pursued if, when called to attend a patient, he found it difficult to determine the disease with which the sick one was suffering. He replied that he examined with great care all the symptoms; he felt the pulse; he noted the temperature; he looked at the tongue; he made

inquiries as to the pains; he studied closely every phase of the disease; and if he did not then reach a satisfactory conclusion, he would give the patient some simple, innocent dose; then he hastened to consult his best authorities, and, comparing the symptoms of the patient with those described in his books, he made his prescription and administered to the sick. Even then he was not always sure of being right. But in the Gospel we have a Physician who has no need to appeal to text-books to determine what man needs. He is Divine. He knows the true condition and the wants of the patient. He comprehends the whole case. He notes the abnormal state of man's moral pulse. He sees how man's spiritual nerves have been affected by sin. He marks the gangrene of evil that is spreading in man's heart. He witnesses the tendency in man's soul to mortification. He knows how sin has paralyzed man's whole moral being, and the fatal nature of the disease with which man is afflicted. His diagnosis of man's fallen condition is perfect. He possesses Divine knowledge. Jesus, the Christ, the Son of God, is our Great Physician, and knows how to treat one suffering with the disease of sin.

2. In Christianity is provided a remedy that possesses power sufficient to effect a cure.

A physician may be able to determine the nature of the disease with which the patient is suffering, but in order to restore him to health he must prescribe an efficient remedy. The medicine given must possess virtue enough, not only to arrest the

disease and remove its cause, but also to assist the functions of the body to perform again their normal work. Some diseases of the physical man can be arrested or entirely removed, while for others no antidote has been discovered by science. But for all of man's moral maladies there is provided the means of certain cure; there is "balm in Gilead." The Gospel presents a remedy that possesses Divine merit and Divine power. The Apostle Peter refers to this when he says, "Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ." Another apostle, in the letter to the Hebrews, refers to the same thing. "How much more," says he, "shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God!" The blood of Christ was shed for the healing of the nations. This is the specific, the effective remedy for man sick of sin. There was necessary for man's salvation, not only the shedding of blood, but that the blood should possess healing virtue. The blood of the lamb offered as a sacrifice, outside of its typical nature, was without restoring power. The blood of a holy man would have been insufficient. A remedy was necessary that would exercise healing virtue upon man in all ages and in all parts of the earth; a remedy that, in its influence, could reach from ocean to ocean, from one generation to another; a remedy that would effect a cure from the gates of Eden to the end of time. Such a pro-

vision is found in the Gospel, in the shed blood of Christ. It possesses Divine merit and Divine power. It is not claimed that, in the sufferings and death of Jesus upon the cross, the Divinity suffered or that God died. The Divine can neither suffer nor die. But in Jesus Christ, when offering Himself for sin, the Divinity was so intimately associated with the humanity that the blood shed upon the cross received from the presence and approval of the Divinity both Divine merit and Divine virtue. It was endowed with Divine merit as a propitiation for man, and Divine power for the healing of all diseases caused by sin. The virtue of that blood extended back from the cross to dying Abel and the believing patriarchs, and from Calvary the stream of healing waters flows on through passing generations to the last son and daughter of man. The virtue of that precious blood to-day is all-powerful and ever-present at the door of every penitent's heart. It is able to remove the disease of sin and restore to spiritual health. There is balm in Gilead. A glorious remedy is provided, one that possesses the Divine attributes of the dying Son of God. There is no phase of moral disease that it can not remove. It can cleanse the leprous and make the paralytic well; it can give sight to the spiritually blind, and life to the spiritually dead; it can cleanse from all the contagions of evil, and make man every whit whole. It is God's panacea for all the ills occasioned by sin, and gives assurance of life and hope to every suffering, dying patient.

3. In Christianity the Holy Spirit is revealed as ever present and ready to apply this remedy.

In the sick-chamber there is necessary an attendant upon the suffering patient. A wise physician may correctly determine the nature of the disease and prescribe an effective remedy. But a kind and attentive nurse is needed by day and by night at the bedside, to administer the medicine and watch over the sick one. The best physician and the best prescription fail to restore health if the remedy is not properly given. Many sick persons die for the want of a good nurse. In the Gospel is provided an Attendant who is ever present to care for the sick and administer the healing balm. When Jesus was about to leave His disciples He said to them: "I will not leave you comfortless. The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in My name, He shall teach all things and bring all things to your remembrance whatsoever I have said unto you." He is to be an abiding Comforter. He comes to man sick of sin, and applies the remedy that insures the blessing of spiritual health. Though man be far from home; though no earthly friend be near to speak a word of comfort or assuage a single pain; though he may pillow his head upon a stone in the wilderness, or tread the desert waste,—at home or abroad, the Holy Spirit is there to apply the healing balm to his sin-sick heart, to gently place beneath his head the pillow of God's loving grace, to inspire his soul with words of promise, and to apply the blood of cleansing to his spiritual

being. This Holy Comforter was with the bruised and wounded disciples of Christ as they lay in prison cells. He gave strength and courage to the martyrs as they burned at the stake. He goes with the messengers of the truth through all their tribulations. He hears the cry of every penitent sorrowing on account of sin, and cleanses every soul panting for holiness. He journeys with every Christian pilgrim along life's pathway, and by His presence enables him to triumph in the hour of death. He comes with the Great Physician's prescription for the healing of sin's diseases, and applies the precious balm that gives health and life and joy to man.

4. This Great Physician has always been successful. In the practice of his profession success is always a recommendation for a physician. If failure has marked his past work, few would look to him for help. Success in any calling is an evidence of skill and ability for that especial work. If you have sickness in your home that requires medical aid, you are apt to employ a physician who has successfully treated patients similarly afflicted. His success is an assurance to your mind of his medical knowledge and medical skill, and you very readily intrust the treatment of your sick friend to his care. The Great Physician presented in the Gospel has always been successful in healing the spiritually diseased committed to His hand. He has never lost a case; He has never failed to restore to spiritual health a single patient who has sought His aid.

In all ages of the world, in all countries, and in all climates, complete success has attested His wisdom and His skill. Saul of Tarsus, the proud Pharisee, when prostrated by guilt, when blinded by sin, accepted of Jesus as his Savior, and as he bowed his heart to the will of Christ the scales fell from his eyes, guilt no longer oppressed his soul, and he was made spiritually well. The bold and passionate Peter was relieved of his natural besetments and made a humble and earnest apostle of Christ. By the wonderful curative power of this Physician the superstitious heathen, the devotees at the shrines of idols, the cruel mountaineer, and the barbarous tribes of the islands of the sea have been changed into peaceful worshipers of the true God, old men have been cured of lifelong maladies, strong men have been made submissive to the influence of love, youth has been rescued from the bonds of evil habits, and laughing childhood has been saved from the infectious diseases of sin. The healing power of the Man of Nazareth has never failed.

5. The services of this Physician can be secured by all. Many who suffer from bodily infirmities are unable to employ a physician or obtain the necessary medicine. The cost of such service is beyond their ability to pay. The fee required can not be met on account of poverty, and they must suffer on without hope of relief. But in the provisions of the Gospel it is made possible for every one to obtain the help needed. It is true a fee must be paid to secure the presence of the Great Physician and the healing

balm. The requirement is positive, the price demanded must be paid, but the conditions are such that every one may perform them. Mercy and wisdom mark this Gospel provision. Had a certain amount of knowledge been required, had an examination in science or philosophy or literature been necessary, how many would have failed to reach the standard demanded! Had the fee for securing the Great Physician been so much gold or silver, or so many acres of land or pounds of produce, many would have been found wanting. Had the fee been the possession of beauty of form, or the brightness of the eye, or the agility of the limbs, then the cripple, the blind, and the ugly would have had no hope. Had the condition been the color of the skin, the height of the stature, the age of the patient or his place of nativity, how many must have died without help! The fee for the attendance of the physician must be met. He visits no sick-chamber, administers the healing balm to no suffering patient, until the price has been paid. But every one is able to pay the fee. It is appointed by Jesus Himself; not so much money, not social position, not genius, not beauty of form, not earthly knowledge,—it is simply, "Give me thy heart." No greater price could be required; no fee easier to be paid could be demanded. The poorest of the sons of men lying upon a bed of straw can give his heart to Jesus; the richest prince upon the throne can do no more. Whoever pays the fee is immediately made whole. There is balm in Gilead; there is a Physician there,

and the health of the world may be restored; for the provisions, the purpose, and the power of the Gospel are sufficient for the healing of the nations.

II. THE QUESTION CONSIDERED: "Why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?"

If Christianity is not a failure; if it affords a Physician of perfect knowledge and skill; if it provides a remedy that never fails to cure, why then are not all mankind saved from the disease of sin? This question should engage the most earnest thought of every Christian, and its solution should lead him to exercise stronger faith and to make a fuller consecration of himself to the service of God.

I. The unfaithfulness to simple Gospel truth on the part of the professed followers of Christ has been one of the chief hindrances to the complete triumphs of Christianity. The prescription as given by the Great Physician has been altered to suit the notions of men; the remedy has been adulterated with human error, so that its power and efficiency have been very much diminished. When the variety of forms in which the prescription has been presented are considered, there can be little wonder that the world is not saved.

In one form it claims to embrace the teachings and truths of the Bible, but adds as equally essential the traditions of men, the infallibility of the priesthood, the adoration of the saints, the worship of the Virgin, the deifying of the crucifix, and many

other superstitions. This is offered as a healing balm to man guilty before God and sick of sin. By it more importance is attached to grand ceremonies than to simple Gospel truth; more dependence for spiritual health is placed upon confession of sin to man than to God; more concern is manifested to be sprinkled with "holy water" than to receive the witness of the Holy Spirit; more eagerly is sought the smiles of the Virgin than the approval of God. This prescription, with all of its ceremonies, its robes and rituals, its traditions and human ordinances, is offered as a healing balm for the world's maladies. There is no wonder that complete spiritual health has not been obtained.

In another modified form the prescription includes only the love of God. His justice is ignored; His threatened punishment for sin is denied; His requirement of faith as the condition of salvation and obedience to Divine law as a means of gaining heaven are discarded, and only the love of God is retained. But this sugar-coated pill has failed to make the world well.

Again, the prescription is changed so as to present the truths of the Gospel diluted with an abundance of water. Stress is laid more upon the outward ceremony than the inward grace, more upon the deeds of the body than upon the change of the heart, and man by it fails to gain spiritual health.

Many other compounds of Bible truth and human theories have been proposed as certain cures; but instead of saving the world, they have proven

hindrances to the progress of the Gospel's healing power. Forgetting the plain and simple teachings of Christ, His professed followers have engaged in bitter controversies with each other over unimportant dogmas. Religious wars have been waged over mere forms and ceremonies. Questions in reference to petty rules of ecclesiastical organizations have created feuds and factions. In departing from the teachings of the Gospel and the Spirit of Christ, those professing His name have delayed the coming of His kingdom. Had there always been steadfastness to the truths of the Gospel and to the commands of Jesus, the world would now have been in a much more healthy and happy condition.

2. A want of faithfulness to duty by professed Christians has retarded the work of saving the world. The remedy as prescribed by the Great Physician is to be continually used. To realize spiritual health and spiritual growth there is need of constant supplies of grace. Too many, after having experienced the Gospel's health-giving power, cease to observe its requirements, and again relapse into the chill and fever of sin. Their failure creates doubts in the minds of others and prevents them from partaking of the Gospel remedy. The true followers of Christ gain spiritual health and moral vigor from the daily practice of prayer and praise, from faithful attendance upon the services and ordinances of the Church of God, and from a life devoted to good works.

3. The failure of Christians to make known

more widely the Gospel remedy is cause of many living and dying unsaved. The world advertises widely the medicines it offers for the healing of bodily ailments. Its nostrums are everywhere, and in every possible way made known. Every issue of the press contains columns and even whole pages of advertisements commending them for their healing virtue. Their curative power is published in large placards posted up at every street corner, by every home, and along every roadside. The granite boulder and the sturdy tree are made to speak forth their excellencies. It is said that a man climbing one of our Eastern mountains, when he got near the top, said to his comrade, "We will soon reach a point where patent-medicine posters will not grow." But as he stepped upon the summit, what should greet his eye but the name of one of these popular nostrums printed in large letters upon a huge rock? The Gospel remedy needs to be published more extensively. "Go ye into all the world and preach My Gospel to every creature," is the command of the risen Savior. Advertise its healing power in every issue of the press; post it up on every roadside; make it known in every valley and on every mountain; tell the story of the cross in every land; proclaim the glad news to every tribe, and people, and tongue. Let the whole world become familiar with the name of Jesus and His saving power.

5. But the chief obstacle in the way of the Gospel's cleansing and healing power is the natural

wickedness of the human heart. The unsaved condition of the world can not be wholly charged to the unfaithfulness of God's people. Man is not only sick because of sin, but he takes pleasure in his moral ailments. He is naturally averse to being healed. Sin has made him unhappy, but he strangely imagines that indulgence in that which is the cause of his unhappiness will bring him joy; that what has occasioned the moral disease of his heart will eradicate that disease. His love of sin, his hatred of God, his unbelief, his spiritual blindness, prevent his applying to the Great Physician for balm for his sin-sick soul. Like fetters of iron his sins hold him fast in the road that leads to death. Fallen human nature everywhere opposes the use of the only remedy there is provided for the world's maladies; unbelief, with its great host, wages warfare against the kingdom of Christ; and its deluded victims are falling on every battlefield. Yet, notwithstanding the unfaithfulness of the professed followers of Christ to the simple teachings of the Gospel and their lack of holy living; notwithstanding their failure to make known to every creature the remedy provided for sin; notwithstanding the opposition of fallen human nature to the glorious provisions of the Gospel of Christ, the name of Jesus, the loving Savior, is being made known more fully in all parts of the earth. The healing balm is effecting cures in all lands; the Great Physician is making visits and healing the sick in all climes. The spiritual health of mankind is improving. The

world is coming nearer to God. The tramp of His marshaled hosts is heard on all the highways of earth; and ere long the brighter day will dawn when the sickness and sorrows of sin will disappear, and moral health will bless all people; when the glad tidings will echo around the world, "There is balm in Gilead; there is a Physician there; and the health of the daughter of my people is recovered."

"Then shall the reign of grace commence on earth,
And, starting fresh as from his second birth,
Man, in the sunshine of the world's new Spring,
Shall walk transparent like some holy thing."

IX.

PRAYER.

"Ask, and you shall receive, that your joy may be full."—JOHN XVI, 24.

THESE words of Jesus were uttered a short while before His crucifixion. They are a part of His last conversation with His disciples, and in that conversation He gives to them many precious promises. As He drew near the hour of suffering and death, His love for them grew warmer, His words more tender, His sympathies deeper, His promises richer. The disciples were made sad when He told them that He was soon to be separated from them. With them the question would naturally arise, What could they do if their great Teacher and loving Leader should be taken away? For three years they had followed His footsteps, they had listened to His words, they had witnessed His wonderful works. Now He was to go before them no longer. In this last discourse He makes known to them grander truths, and gives them richer promises, as if to lift the shadow of sadness from their hearts, and to impart greater courage to go forward in the work to which He had called them. He tells them that He is going away, but that He goes to prepare man-

sions for them. He would no longer go before them as their Teacher, but they would have His Word from which they could always gain lessons of Divine truth. He would no longer be present with them to guide them and give them comfort, but He would send the Comforter, who would abide with them forever. And whenever they should need help or advice or wisdom, they could go to the Father in His name; and says He to each one of them, "Ask, and you shall receive, that your joy may be full."

These words were spoken to the disciples, not only for their encouragement, but were uttered for the benefit of His followers in all ages and in all climes. They come with equal assurance to our hearts. After nearly twenty centuries have come and gone, we may hear the same tender voice speaking to us, and saying, "Ask, and you shall receive, that your joy may be full." Jesus in these words makes prominent and important the exercise of prayer to God; He prescribes the acceptable manner; and He refers to the great benefits realized by all who engage in this service.

I. PRAYER IS A CHRISTIAN DUTY. "Ask the Father in My name; ask, and you shall receive."

1. Prayer is appropriate for man. The elements of which prayer is constituted clearly show this appropriateness. The act of prayer is in full accord with man's relations to God.

It is an acknowledgment of God's sovereignty, and that He is the giver of all our benefits. No

fact is more clearly revealed than that God is our ruler, that He reigns both in heaven and in earth. The works of nature, as well as His Word, demonstrate His existence, give proof of His omnipresence, and attest His controlling power. He is revealed to us as the Author of all our mercies, that life and all the blessings of life are received from His bountiful hands; that "in Him we live, and move, and have our being." Man, as His subject, should therefore come to God with all his wants, and acknowledge Him in all his ways.

Prayer implies thanksgiving and praise for mercies received. Who is there among all the sons of men that has not received blessings from God? Every day His well-providing hand has strewn bounties along our paths. Every warm sunbeam, every refreshing shower, every supply of food and raiment, every breath we draw and every beating pulse we tell, is God's gift to man, and is evidence of His watch-care and preserving power. Shall man as an ingrate receive these blessings without acknowledgment in return? Should not every comfort bestowed incite in the heart a spirit of praise and thanksgiving?

Prayer is a confession of sins. Man needs not some monitor to tell him that he is a sinner. His own consciousness recognizes his guilt and his proneness to do evil. If he has sinned, is it not appropriate for him to come to God with a sincere, a humble, a full confession of his sins?

Prayer is an acknowledgment of the need of

help: "Ask the Father in My name," seek help from Him through My merits. He that prays in the right spirit has a full sense of his own unworthiness; he realizes that he has nothing in himself to plead, and that he needs help from One who is able to save. The merit of the atoning Christ is the only plea that can recommend us to God. In His name we may pray, and in His name we may prevail.

2. Prayer is a duty. It is clearly taught in the Word of God. Express commands to pray are often given. Jesus instructed His disciples how to pray. He bids them always to "watch and pray." He encourages them to pray with the assurance that they should receive. God invites man in every trouble to "call upon" Him. The example of His saints of old enforces this duty. Jacob wrestled with the angel in prayer, and God heard him. The Psalmist rejoices that his feet were taken from the pit of mire and clay because God heard his cry. Daniel prayed three times each day with his window open and his face toward Jerusalem, and God preserved his life when he was cast into the den of lions. The apostles prayed and sang praises to God in prison, and their bonds were loosened and they were set free. The same loving Father to-day bends the heavens, and listens to the supplications of His people. The prayer offered in secret will be answered openly. The petitions that go up from the family altar will not fail to be heard on high. The cries that are poured forth at the altar of the Church will ascend as sweet incense before the throne of God. Prayer

will always insure the Divine blessing. The Christian overcomes temptation and gains strength, he lives and grows spiritually, because he prays.

“Prayer is the Christian's vital breath,
The Christian's native air;
His watchword at the gates of death;
He enters heaven by prayer.”

II. PRAYER IS A REASONABLE DUTY. Its performance is the reasonable condition of obtaining temporal and spiritual blessings. “Ask, and you shall receive.”

There are few professed Christians who expect to be blessed spiritually without offering prayer to God. They go to the mercy-seat for strengthening of faith, for revival of zeal, for purity of heart, for an increase of love. But while they use this service as a means of spiritual growth, there are many who doubt its efficiency as a condition of temporal blessings. They seldom bring their material interests to God in prayer, or implore the Divine favor upon the work of their hands. But the Scriptures clearly teach that both are the suitable subjects of prayer, and that it is right and proper to invoke God's blessing upon all our interests both of soul and body.

The unbelief of the world denies any benefit in offering prayer. Infidelity boldly objects to its exercise as unreasonable and of no use. The objections urged by unbelief very often cool the ardor of the Christian as he comes to the mercy-seat, and weaken his faith in the promise of blessings. But

when these objections are candidly considered they will be found to be without good foundation. The arguments used against prayer as a means of obtaining Divine mercies, temporal and spiritual, are full of fallacies and their conclusions untrue.

1. It is objected that prayer is unreasonable in view of the wisdom and goodness of God. It is urged that as God is all-wise He knows before man can pray what is best for him to receive; and as He is all-goodness He will bestow upon man that which is best, whether he prays or does not pray. Then it is asked: "If prayer will not increase the knowledge or goodness of God, what is the use of offering prayer? If God knows what is best and will always do that which is best for man, wherein is the benefit of prayer?" This plausible objection of unbelief has doubtless often stood in the way of the Christian in coming to the mercy-seat. The doubting heart has said, "God knows what is best for me, and He will do that which is best for me whether I pray or not; there is therefore no use for me to pray." This species of reasoning has doubtless been often the cause of neglecting this precious means of grace. The reasoning of the objector, however, fails to be good logic. It is assumed in the objection that what is best for the man when he prays is best for him when he does not pray. This assumption is untrue, and its untruthfulness destroys all the force of the objection. While prayer does not change the attributes of God or the character of man, the act of praying places man in a new relation

to God, so that Divine blessings can be bestowed upon him because he prays, that would have been withholden if he had not prayed. Take a simple illustration. There is a father who has two sons. On account of that father's observation and experience he knows what is best for his sons to receive. Because of his paternal love and goodness of heart he will always do that which is best for his sons. But it does not therefore follow that he will always treat the two boys alike. One of the boys is obedient and faithful to all the directions of his father. Let him receive the command to perform some arduous work, he goes immediately and discharges his duty as best he can. When he returns to his father with the report that he has done the work, that father, as every father ought, receives him graciously, and bestows a warm paternal blessing upon his obedient boy. The other son is disobedient. He regards not his father's counsel, and neglects to follow his father's orders. If he is sent on an errand of duty, he returns without having attempted to perform the work. Will that father, who knows what is best for his sons and who will always do that which is best by his sons,—will he receive the disobedient boy with a smile of approval and a parental blessing? Would that be the best for the son to receive? Will not the father, on the other hand, sadly and sternly reprove him for his disobedience, and, instead of blessing, administer rather the rod of correction, that the wayward boy may be reclaimed from his evil-doing? We are God's chil-

dren. He bids us to pray unto Him for blessings. If we neglect His command with the plea that He knows what is best for us, and that He will do that which is best for us whether we pray or not, that we will not pray because prayer is useless, can we hope to receive at our Father's hand the blessings promised to those who lift up the voice of earnest supplication? That which is best for the one that prays is not the best for the one who does not pray, and that which is best for the one who does not pray is not the best for the one who does pray. This objection urged against the practice of prayer has no solid foundation. It should be earnestly brushed aside in our approach to the mercy-seat.

2. Another objection to prayer is based upon the infinite nature of the Divine Being. It is urged that, as God is infinite and man is finite, it is unreasonable to suppose that prayer will be heard and answered. It is asked, Can we expect that God who made the world, who builded the mountains, who scooped out the ocean depths, who lit up the stars in the heavens and guides the suns in their orbits, who is the object of the adoration of angels and arch-angels, who every moment superintends this wonderful universe which His hands have formed,—that He will stoop to hear the cry of man, of feeble, finite man, a worm of the dust, a creature of to-day and gone to-morrow? It is claimed to be unreasonable to expect that He will listen to our prayers, and, because we pray, bestow blessings upon us. Our hearts may have often fainted within us when

in our approaches to the mercy-seat we have thought of our littleness in comparison with the infinity of the Divine Being. Almost in despair we have cried out: "Will the Almighty hear our prayers? Will He, in answer to our petitions, bestow His blessings upon us?" Yet our faith need not grow weak, nor the voice of supplication be hushed. In the very fact that God is infinite, man, though finite, may find hope. It is not the merit of the creature that attracts the notice of God. If any creature that He has made can merit the notice of God's eye, what one more than man? It is true that man is finite. It is true that, when he is physically compared with the material universe, he is little and insignificant. Compare the dimensions of his body with yonder hill, and how small he appears! Let him stand at the base of the mountain that lifts its head above the clouds, and he is so little that he is almost hid from view by the shadow of its rocky heights. Take the whole material creation,—its suns and its stars, its systems of worlds and planets that revolve through unbounded space; put them all into one scale, and man physically into the other, and so far do they exceed him in weight that he seems but as a grain of sand on the seashore or a mote floating in the evening sunbeam; far too insignificant, it would seem, to attract the notice of God's eye. But man is not all material. He has within his bosom a thinking, spiritual nature that is immortal. He possesses a soul that shall live when the mountains shall be melted into the valleys;

a soul that shall live when the heavens are rolled together like a parchment scroll and are consumed by fire; a soul that shall live on, and at nature's funeral pyre shall sing the dirge of dying worlds. If there is merit in any creature to attract the attention of the Creator, certainly that creature is man. But we must confess that man, though possessed of an immortal soul, has no merit. He has committed sin, and all that he deserves of God is condemnation for sin and banishment from His presence and the glory of His power. Yet there is hope. God is infinite. Because He is infinite He is omnipresent. He is present in the heavens above and in the earth beneath. He is present in the city full and in the desert waste. He is present in the marble palace and in the peasant's home. He is present in the chamber of sickness, by the pallet of straw, and on the pilgrim's road. He is present by your side at home or in the Church. Wherever you lift the voice in prayer, God is there to hear your petitions and to bless your heart. That infinite God speaks lovingly to finite man and says, "Come boldly to a throne of grace that ye may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need."

3. Again, the objection is raised that prayer is unreasonable on account of the immutability of God. The objector asks: "Why do you offer prayer expecting that God will bless you because you pray? Why," says he, "God is immutable; He changes not. If He intends to bless you, He will bless you whether you pray or not. If He does not intend to

bless you, your prayers can not change Him so that He may bestow a blessing upon you." This objection is also characterized by fallacy and gross assumption. It is true that God is immutable. He changes not. He is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever. But in what sense is God immutable? Turning to the words of inspiration for an answer to this question, we find that in the principles of His nature God is unchangeable, but in the works of His hands He is always changing. God possessed the attribute of holiness when the morning stars first sang together, and He is holy still. God was omnipotent when He made the worlds, and He is almighty to-day. God was a God of truth and veracity in the beginning, He is still a God of veracity; therefore His word must stand forever. All His promises will be fulfilled. But in giving a history of the creation the Scriptures tell us that on the first day God made one class of objects, and "the evening and the morning were the first day." On the second day He changes in the work of His hands and creates another class of objects, and "the evening and the morning were the second day." On the third day He changes again; also on the fourth, the fifth, and the sixth day. After He had finished the heavens and the earth and all the host of them, He changed again, and on the seventh day "He rested from all the works which He made." He is always changing in the works of His hands. With this interpretation of God's immutability I can come to the mercy-seat with blessed assurance. His own

promise is, "Ask, and you shall receive." As He is unchangeable in the principles of His nature, and as veracity is one of His attributes, I know His promise will be verified. As He is always changing in the works of His hands, at His command I "ask," and, opening His bountiful hand, He fulfills His promise, and bestows showers of blessings upon my soul. His immutability is my sure refuge; it is the great rock on which faith for blessings in answer to prayer firmly rests.

4. Prayer is also a reasonable means of securing temporal mercies. Unbelief holds that prayer can not avail anything in advancing material interests, and that it is unreasonable to expect any benefit from it when everything is controlled by the law of cause and effect. How, it is asked, can prayer change results that come from the operation of the fixed laws of nature? How can prayer be effectual in healing the sick, in bringing showers to the thirsty land, in increasing the harvests of the field, or in turning away the approaching tornado? These are effects produced by the laws of nature, and unbelief claims that it is unreasonable to try by prayer to interfere with them or make any change. But what are the "laws of nature," and who created and holds in His grasp the chain of cause and effect? There is evident the presence of an operating force; who wields that force? It is not blind fate or unthinking chance. The laws of nature are God's ways of working. The chain of cause and effect is molded by His hand. Can not the same

power that created, at His own will, change? To deny that He does make any changes is an assumption. To say that He can not bring about different results is to limit His omnipotence. We may not be able to explain how a God of infinite wisdom may effect the work, but, accepting His Word as both reasonable and true, we may pray with faith for both temporal and spiritual mercies. Let us therefore bring all our wants to the mercy-seat, for God heareth us. Let us accept with unwavering confidence His precious promise, "Ask, and you shall receive."

III. THE STRONG INCENTIVE TO OFFER PRAYER:

"You shall receive, that your joy may be full."

I. The blessing promised is just what man wants, that his joy may be full. The guilt and impurities of sin, the disappointments, the trials, and the sorrows of life have flooded his soul with grief, and he longs for joy. He has failed to find in worldly pleasure true happiness or to discover in earthly surroundings a fountain of perennial peace. To his anxious, longing soul Jesus says, "Ask, and you shall receive, that your joy may be full." Some would add, "Ask largely;" but Jesus simply says, "Ask;" "Ask, and you shall receive." This is not man's promise; it is not the pledge of an earthly prince; it is the word of Jesus, the Son of God. He has insured the fulfillment of the promise by sealing it with His own heart's blood. He has made its realization certain by sending the Holy

Comforter to effect its coming. The Godhead manifest bodily in the person of Jesus Christ has indorsed the promise. Ask, ask with faith; ask without fear; ask the Father in Jesus' name, and "you shall receive, that your joy may be full."

2. The promise has been fulfilled in all ages of the world. The small band of disciples, after the ascension of Christ, met in an upper chamber in Jerusalem, and there tested this promise. While singing psalms of praise, while engaged in earnest prayer, the Holy Comforter was poured upon them, and their hearts were baptized with heavenly joy. The publican, sad in heart, went up to the temple to pray. So sorrowful and heavy-laden was he that he could not so much as lift up his face to heaven, but stood smiting his hand upon his bosom, saying, "Lord, be merciful to me a sinner." The record is, he "went down to his house justified;" that is, with his heart full of joy. Thousands of others, oppressed by guilt, have offered the same prayer, and realized in their glad experience the fulfillment of the same promise. The mercy-seat in the Holy of Holies was overshadowed by the wings of the cherubim, and often lit up with the glory of the Lord. The Divine glory still hovers over the place of prayer, and God's people there realized His blessed presence.

"There, there on eagle's wings we soar,
And sin and sense molest no more;
And heaven comes down our souls to greet,
And glory crowns the mercy-seat."

3. Prayer is effectual in securing blessings for others also. Petitions will be heard when offered in behalf of the Church, of the sick and sorrowing, and of those who are unsaved. It is an efficient means of extending the influence and power of the religion of Christ. A striking incident illustrates this fact. It is said that, some years ago, in a portion of one of the Eastern States was a neighborhood almost wholly given over to infidelity. A few Christian women resolved to attempt the introduction of the Bible and Christianity among the families residing there. They organized a Sabbath-school, and went from house to house, inviting the children to attend. Sometimes they were well received by the parents; at other times they met with discouraging rebuffs. At one house, where the parents were both skeptical, the father at first refused to permit his children to go to the school, saying there was nothing of good in Christianity. They gently but earnestly urged his acquiescence. Finally he yielded, saying the Sunday-school would do his children no good nor any harm, as the Christian religion was only a fiction. Perhaps while the children were in the school they would be out of his way. The three children entered the school and became deeply interested in its exercises. They learned the story of Jesus and His saving mercy, and their young hearts were soon made happy by trusting in Him as their Savior. Returning one day from the school, they talked with each other about the condition of their parents, and resolved

that at an appointed hour they would offer prayers in their behalf. The hour came, and they went each to a different place to pray. The father, not knowing where his children were, nor caring much about them, left the house in a blustering manner. As he hastened down the pathway towards the barn he was much surprised to hear the voice of his little boy, as he knelt in the fence-corner, earnestly praying, "Lord, bless father and mother, and lead them to love Jesus." The prayer aroused the feelings of the father at first, but, brushing aside the surprise, he continued his course. He had not gone far till the voice of his youngest daughter fell upon his ear, and she, too, was praying, "Lord, bless father and mother, and lead them to love Jesus the Savior." The prayers of his little children troubled his heart and strangely overcame him. He concluded to go to the barn, and there get free from the deep impression that had been made upon his mind. But just as he entered the barn door, there in one corner knelt his oldest daughter, bathed in tears and fervently praying, "Lord, bless father and mother, and bring them to know Jesus and His saving love." He could endure the powerful impression no longer; he hastily, with falling tears, drew near and knelt by the side of his daughter, earnestly prayed for pardoning grace, cast away his unbelief, and soon rejoiced in saving mercy. Gathering his children together in the arms of a new love, he went with them to the house, told his wife of the rich experience he had found, and their

united prayers soon resulted in her conversion and in making that a truly happy household. The fire thus kindled spread from house to house, and from heart to heart, until the whole neighborhood was changed from unbelievers to joyful Christians.

God hears the prayers of the old and the young, of the rich and the poor, of the learned and the unlearned. In answer to prayer He convicts sinners, comforts penitents, builds up His people in the faith of the Gospel. There is saving power in prayer. "Ask, and you shall receive, that your joy may be full."

X.

REJOICE EVERMORE.

“Rejoice evermore.”—I THESS. V, 16.

THERE is in every human heart the earnest desire to be happy. That desire is not only to be happy, but to be happy always. No one longs for days of sadness or seasons of sorrow. No one wishes to walk in the shadows of grief or to dwell in the house of mourning. The utmost effort of all men is to acquire such surroundings as will give promise of continual happiness. Many and various are the means employed to attain this end. Some seek it in the exciting rounds of worldly pleasure. Some imagine that it may be gained by giving full indulgence to the lusts and appetites of mind and body. Others suppose that by acquiring wealth they will have that which will insure them unceasing joy. Others deem that it will come with positions of worldly honors and by having their names inscribed high on the roll of earthly fame; while there are still others who leave home and friends, endure the hardships of travel into distant and strange lands, expecting to find there overflowing fountains of joy and skies that are ever bright and fair. But failure has been the result of all these efforts. It

has been found by sad experience that this earth affords no perennial fountain of happiness, that there is no land without clouds and no sea without storms. In the text the apostle presents the religion of the Lord Jesus Christ as that only which will meet at all times man's most earnest longings. He recommends it as a possession that will give comfort to the heart when all else fails, and enable man to "rejoice evermore."

There are those who claim that the gaining of such a state is an impossibility. Even many who profess to be Christians believe that one can not in this life be always happy. They expect to meet with seasons of rejoicings, but also look for times of sadness. They hope for days when they will stand on the mountain top where all is sunshine and clear skies, but look for these to be followed by dark and stormy nights. We live in a mixed world, they say; a world of sunshine and shadow, a world of light and darkness, a world of smiles and tears, a world of health and sickness, a world of life and death; and they ask: "How, in such a changing world, can anything supply continual joy? How can even the religion of Christ make man, here, always happy? There will no doubt," they continue, "be seasons of rejoicings, but hours of sadness are sure to come. There will be calms and storms, clear days and cloudy days, alternating all along the journey of life, and in these constant changes how can one always possess the spirit of rejoicing?" To such objections the answer may be given: Paul, the

inspired author of the text, lived in just such a world as we live in. He had the same besetments of human nature to contend with that we have; he had to meet the same spiritual foes that place temptations in our way; his trials were much more severe than what we encounter; he experienced fearful storms and shipwrecks on the sea and bitter persecution and buffetings on the land; his life was exposed to danger at all times; yet out of all these fearful surroundings he comes rejoicing. He is overwhelmed by no wave of gloom; he is discouraged in his work by no opposition; his spirit of rejoicing is quenched by no storm of trouble; out of all he comes triumphantly, with his trust in God unshaken,—a striking illustration of the comforting and sustaining power of the Gospel, and assures all the followers of Christ that it is their precious privilege to “rejoice evermore.”

A candid consideration of the work of grace wrought upon the heart and life of the believer will show that the apostolic command of the text is both reasonable and philosophical. The religion of the Gospel is a certain source of continual happiness.

1. It removes from man's heart conscious guilt, and gives a blessed assurance of acceptance with God. When this change is experienced, peace and joy are the certain results. The environments of man do not necessarily make up or mar his happiness. The state of the heart determines the life. If the heart is sad, man will live a sad life; if the heart is happy, the whole man will be happy what-

ever may be his surroundings. The man convicted of murder and sentenced to death is sad because he knows he is guilty and that he must suffer for his crime. While in such a condition no outward circumstances can afford him relief. You may go to the prison in which he is confined, and try to comfort him and make him happy. You may spread before him the choicest of food and drink; you may open his windows so that he can look out upon beautiful and fragrant flowers; you may station near him an orchestra that will pour forth the most enlivening strains of music; you may surround him with his dearest friends. After preparing everything that promises to give joy to his heart you may say to him, "Now be happy; now be cheerful; now indulge the spirit of rejoicing; be no longer sad, for you have about you everything that you can desire." But all these things would not be able to give joy to his heart; they would not relieve him of his guilt as a criminal; they would not remove the sentence of his condemnation, or defer the hour appointed for him to suffer for his crime. He would realize no relief from his sad condition from all these delightful surroundings.

Or take a more homely illustration: That man is suffering severely with the toothache. The process of decay in the nerve of the tooth causes intense pain. The whole body agonizes in sympathy with the decaying tooth. His sufferings make him cross, unpleasant, and unhappy. Try to cheer up and cause him to forget his trouble; sing to him

his favorite songs; spread his table with the most inviting food; surround him with scenes of gayety, with laughter, and pleasant words; say to him, "Now eat, drink, and be merry; forget your pains; enter into the glad spirit about you; no longer be fretful or crabbed, but be a happy, cheerful man;" but your efforts would all prove in vain. He would doubtless turn away from you, with his hand pressed hard upon his cheek, and say, "How can I be happy, suffering as I do with this terrible pain?" And he will be unable to rest or find contentment until the pain is quieted with opiates or the tooth is extracted by the dentist. Nothing around him will afford relief. So it is with man spiritually. While unsaved he is conscious of guilt and under the sentence of Divine condemnation. He is suffering with the heartache because of sin. The richest of viands spread before him, the gayest rounds of worldly pleasure, the most enchanting strains of music, the greatest amount of earthly gain or earthly honor, fail to impart true happiness to his soul. Guilt must be removed from his heart, his conscience of sins must be allayed before he can have true peace. Not till he comes to the cross of Christ where pardon is found, not till by faith he brings his troubled soul to a loving Savior, can he obtain real and substantial joy. When sin is forgiven, when he becomes a child of God, then only will a spirit of rejoicing spring up in his heart and his peace flow as a river; "for, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

2. The religion of the Gospel affords a boundless field for the acquisition of knowledge. Man is so constituted that there is necessary a continual increase of his stock of knowledge that he may always be happy. It is his nature to think; it is his earnest desire to know more. He is not contented unless he is acquiring new knowledge. Whatever may be his attainments in learning, he longs to gain more. Nor will his cup of joy be full unless the field of his mental vision is enlarging and new truths are being brought to light. The events of every-day life give proof of this unceasing thirst for something new. When you meet your friend on the way and shake hands with him, almost his first inquiry is, "What's the news to-day?" He wants to add to his stock of knowledge, to know what new events are transpiring in the world, and is content only in having this desire met. It is said that the severest punishment that can be inflicted upon a criminal is confinement in a dark dungeon cell; to incarcerate him where no face can be seen, no voice heard, no friendly hand touched. The dreariness of such confinement is worse than death. While in that dungeon, should some ray of light, entering a crevice, reveal a spider spinning its web in a corner of the cell, the prisoner will watch it intently, be deeply interested in its movements, and seem to obtain some relief from his loneliness. He is gaining some new knowledge, and the earnest longings of his mind are being to some extent gratified. The wider the field for gaining knowledge, the greater

the joy experienced by man. The religion of our Lord Jesus Christ fully meets this requirement of the mind of man. You may say that science supplies this want. It is true that its revelations are many and wonderful. The volume of nature presents a widening scope for thought and investigation. The earth beneath us, the hills and valleys around us, the heavens above us, are constantly inviting us to new discoveries. The material universe is full of grand facts and powerful forces that are only waiting for man to gather them into his storehouse of knowledge, and put them to use for his own good. But the religion of the Gospel presents grander truths, opens to our view wider fields of knowledge, and leads us on beyond the boundaries of science and philosophy. It floods our pathways with light where nature's suns and stars fail to shine. The lessons which science teaches are grand, but grander far the revelations of God's Word. Science tells me that the world exists, that suns and stars march on in bright array; it traces their paths through the heavens; it measures their orbits and determines their weight in its scales; but the Bible tells me whence they all came, by whose almighty scepter they are marshaled in their courses, and whose hand leads them on to their sublime destiny. Science tells me of my material form, of my beating pulse and flowing life blood, of my bone and muscle and brain; but the Bible tells me of my spiritual nature, and reveals my soul's immortality. Science tells me of a burdened heart,

of a guilty conscience, and of a troubled and anxious mind; but the Bible opens to my view a fountain of redeeming mercy, and brings to my bosom the peace and joy of a great salvation. Science tells me of physical pain and disease and death; but the Bible, in a voice so tender that it can melt the heart, and yet so powerful that it can wake the dead, tells me of an unfailing source of comfort when sorrows come, of a glorious resurrection from the dead, of an inheritance that is incorruptible and eternal in the heavens. It reveals a land of perennial joy, a home where pain and death are strangers, a country far beyond the sweep of the most enlarged vision of science. The glorious truths of revelation increase our stock of knowledge, the religion of the Gospel affords continually richer and deeper experiences, and its comforting and hope-inspiring power to the soul enables us to "rejoice evermore."

3. The religion of the Gospel imparts to man steadfast trust in God and in His providential care. A want of this confidence creates in the mind a state of uncertainty and a spirit of fear in regard to the present, and also to the future. The assurance that a kind Father is watching over us every moment to guard us from evil gives contentment, even when storms are around us. That the joy of to-day may be undisturbed we have need of a faith in a good time coming to-morrow. The clouds of the future cast their shadows upon our thresholds in the present. Coming disappointments and coming sorrows mar our present happiness. We need assurance of

protection along our whole journey. A trust in God will relieve us of anxiety in regard to the future and give courage to meet coming events. Much of man's present unhappiness is occasioned by fear of dangers that are imaginary; much of the world's trouble is borrowed trouble. This fact is very clearly illustrated in Bunyan's description of the progress of Christian towards the Celestial City. When almost in sight of that city Christian became affrighted, and stopped on his journey. He was ready to turn his steps back again. His friend urged him to go forward, telling him that his journey was almost at an end; that already the glittering towers and jasper walls of the Heavenly City could be seen; that soon its gates of pearl would be opened for his entrance. But Christian, trembling with fear, replied: "The way is full of dangers. See," said he, "there are ravenous lions along the road before us; I dare not go any farther." His friend urged him on, and, taking him by the hand, led him forward. Trembling and pale with fear, he slowly approached the spot on the road where the lions were seen, and when he came near he saw that they were bound fast with chains on the roadside so that they could not touch him. If we go forward trusting in God we will find that the lions before us are all in chains so that they can not do us harm.

In every calling in life there are those who are more or less borrowers of trouble. Take, as an illustration, that farmer who is always looking for-

ward for unpropitious seasons and failure of crops. Go to him in early springtime, and ask, "What are the prospects for a crop the coming season? do you expect a large harvest this year?" With a countenance growing sad, he will shake his head mournfully and reply: "The prospects are very poor; the spring is backward; the cold, wet weather continues; the ground is not fit for cultivation; we will not be able to plant the seed in proper time, and are sure to fail in getting a crop. We are bound to have a poor harvest and be in want when winter comes." But the cold rains soon cease to fall; the soil grows warm beneath the sunshine of springtime; the corn is planted in good time, and comes up well. Now ask him about the outlook for a crop. "The corn is starting nicely; you have a good stand all over the field; you have prospects for a fine crop, have you not?" He will answer: "Yes, the corn has started well, but the prospects are very bad. The cutworms are abundant in the field, and are badly cutting down the young corn. My hard work, early and late, in getting it planted will all be in vain. The crop will be small, and we will be without bread when winter comes." The hot June sun, however, shines down upon the fields and kills off the cutworms; the corn grows luxuriantly, and looks well. Now say to him: "The outlook for a good crop is very promising. Do you not think you will have a fine harvest?" But he is still fearful, and answers: "Well, I do not know. The corn is growing well now, but the weather is getting very hot. I am

afraid we will have a severe drouth, and then our prospects will all be blighted, and we will be without corn when winter comes." Let the early and latter rains fall copiously upon his fields; let the stalks put forth large and well-filled ears. Now ask him if he is not satisfied. The crop is already made, and the harvest will no doubt be a bountiful one; but he is still fearful, and his countenance is still sad as he answers: "Yes, there is going to be an immense crop to gather at harvest time, but it will be so abundant that corn will not be worth anything in the market. It will hardly bring enough money to pay for putting it in the crib, and we are sure to be in want when winter comes." Let the price of corn, however, remain good; let him sell his hundreds of bushels for good money; let him deposit his money in the bank for safekeeping. Now go to him and ask him if he does not feel happy and cheerful; his corn is sold at good prices, his money is deposited in the bank for his own use, and everything has turned out well. But instead of indulging a spirit of rejoicing, he is still troubled with new fears, and he replies: "It is true I had a large crop, and sold my corn for good prices. It is true I have the money deposited in the bank; but I am afraid the bank will break, and all my hard earned money will be gone." He is never contented, always looking out for trouble, every day anxious about to-morrow. This want of confidence in God's good providences, this borrowing of trouble, is found almost everywhere. It casts its gloomy shadow upon shop

and store, upon communities and families, upon men and women, and ever corrodes with fear the human heart. Trust in God, reliance upon His good providences is needed to drive away the threatening clouds and cause the sunlight to fall upon our pathways. It will give patience to calmly wait and not try to cross the bridge before we come to it. It will quiet our fears of not being able to climb the hill while it is yet far off in the distance. It will assure us that help will be given when help is needed.

You may say to me that your troubles are not borrowed, but real; they are not caused by imaginary events of the future, but by sad facts of to-day. Grievous disappointments have already come upon you. Your property has taken wings and flown away; or the wasting of disease is now at work upon your body; or the shadows of death have crossed your threshold, and loved ones have been called away from your side. Sorrow has overwhelmed you; and you ask how, in the midst of these real misfortunes, can you be happy? how can you rejoice evermore? In reply I would say, no one is able to explain God's mysterious dealings with us in this life. No one can tell why the heart is allowed to be rent with grief, or how the sorrows of this life will be compensated in the life to come. I can not tell why the messenger of death was permitted, on a dark stormy night, to enter my own little home and suddenly take away one who had been a loving companion for many years. I can not

explain these events so heart-rending; yet we are not left to pursue our journey in utter darkness. The inspired Word contains promises that should afford comfort in every sorrow, and give relief to every aching heart. The apostle says, "All things work together for good to them that love and serve God." If "all things" are for our good, why should we be sad? Why should we repine, even when sorest troubles come? If "all things" are for our good, why should we give way to grief or sink down in utter despondency? If "all things" are for our good, why may we not, even amid falling tears, rejoice? If disappointments or bodily affliction are for my good, why should I not willingly endure them? If persecution or poverty is for my good, I would bravely meet them. If the rending of the ties that bind me to loved ones be for my good, I will bow my will to the will of God though tears unbidden overflow mine eyes. If even death is for my good, let no murmur fall from my lips; let no pangs of grief rend my heart when the summons comes. Every changing scene of life should be joyfully met; every trial should be bravely endured. They are for our good, and a loving Father will explain them all to us by and by. Therefore, as they come and go, ever trusting in God, who has said, "My grace shall be sufficient for thee," let us "rejoice evermore."

4. The religion of the Lord Jesus Christ is a sure means of victory. Success always begets gladness in the heart; victory always inspires with a

spirit of rejoicing. See that schoolboy as he starts in the morning to school. He is anxious about the lessons of the day, and worries over the problems he has to solve. But he manifests a different spirit when he returns in the evening. His head is up, and he wears a happy countenance. He joyfully bounds in at the door, and gladly greets his mother with the shout, "I solved all those problems myself!" He has been successful, and is therefore happy. See that soldier in the ranks of an army that is always victorious. He has had long marches; he has been engaged in severe battles; but he returns a happy soldier, for the flag of his regiment has never been trailed in the dust, and his army has been victorious in every engagement. The religion of the Gospel enables the Christian always to be triumphant. Grace is given to him to overcome self; to subdue evil passions; to lay aside every besetting sin; to endure every trial. His heart is inspired with courage to meet the tempter at all times, and to overcome the strongest temptations. The Comforter walks by his side in every sorrow, and gives him grace to endure all pain and suffering. Even when the ties of love are riven asunder and the bitter tears of separation are falling, he is buoyed up with the joyful promise of meeting again where the bonds of love are never broken and where there is no more death; and when his final conflict comes, he is enabled to triumph. When his course is finished and his work is done, he encounters his last enemy without fear, and gains a glorious vic-

tory. Go visit the chamber where the good man meets his fate,—

“T is privileged beyond the common walks of men,
Quite on the verge of heaven.”

There may be weeping around his couch, and the hearts of loved ones may be ready to break; but a smile of joy lights up his countenance, and a shout of triumph is on his lips. You may say to him as he goes down into the valley :

“Pilgrim, see that stream before thee,
Darkly winding through the vale;
Should its chilly waves roll o'er thee,
Then would not thy courage fail?”

But he will answer back, though it may only be in a whisper :

“No; that stream has nothing frightful:
To its brink my steps I'll bend;
There to plunge will be delightful,
There my pilgrimage will end.”

And with the shout of victory, “All is well,” he passes on to the better land.

In every condition in life—in youth or old age, in poverty or wealth, in shadow or in sunshine, in storms or in calms—the religion of the Lord Jesus Christ is a living fountain, from which flow streams of perennial joy. It is a sun that never goes down, but ever throws floods of light upon the Christian's pathway. It is a rich diadem placed upon his brow,

in which gems of light and hope sparkle forever. It is man's richest possession, and gives promise of "the life that now is, and of that which is to come." It removes guilt from the heart, and gives assurance of acceptance with God. It supplies abundant grace for every trial, and imparts the hope of a home in heaven. It takes away the sting of death, gives promise of a resurrection morning, and provides an inheritance above,—one that is incorruptible and that fadeth not away. Child of God, why should you be sad or overcome with sorrow? Why give way to grief, or pass your days in mourning? Yours is a portion that is bright and fair. Yours is a path that shines brighter and brighter. Be of good cheer. Be happy day and night. "Rejoice evermore."

XI.

NOT ASHAMED OF THE GOSPEL.

"For I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth."—ROM. I, 16.

WE have in these words a declaration of Paul's Christian confidence and Christian courage. He gives expression to his unwavering faith in the truth and excellency of the Gospel of Christ. He shows his courage in being willing to preach that Gospel to all men. Although it was everywhere spoken against, he manifests no fear to submit its teachings and influences to the severest test. He not only holds up the cross before those who are inclined to believe; he not only presents Christ Jesus as a Savior to the poor and the unlearned; but to all, to rich and poor, to the learned and the unlearned, to the high and the low, he proclaims with boldness the doctrines of the Gospel. He bears the same precious message to both Jew and Gentile. He preaches Christ and Him crucified as the hope of the world, in the villages of India, in the cities of Asia Minor and to the mixed multitudes of Macedonia. He tells the story of saving grace to the craftsmen of Corinth and to the wise men of Ath-

ens. And he is now willing to go to Rome, and there also preach this Gospel. Although that city was the capital of the Roman Empire, where stood the palaces of the world's rulers; although it was the chief seat of learning and philosophy; although it was the home of wealth and of eloquence; although it was the center of heathen temples and religious ceremonies,—yet even at Rome he was anxious to preach the simple truths of the Gospel; to present it as “the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.”

These are not the words of a fanatic, or the expression of a mere enthusiast. They are the calm utterance of a well-educated man; a man of strong intellectual powers; a man of eloquent speech and ready pen; a man who was always strictly conscientious. Had he found the Gospel to be a mere invention or fiction of men; had he discovered in its teachings gross errors or contradictions of the truth; had he seen that the reception of its claims and the observance of its ordinances were injurious and degrading to men; or had it failed, in fulfilling its promise to those who received it, to give them pardon, and peace, and hope,—then might Paul have been ashamed of it. But he had fully tested the saving power of the Gospel in his own experience; he had noted its elevating and purifying influence upon the lives and characters of others, and he had found in it clear evidence of its Divine origin and Divine excellency. He therefore, everywhere, boldly declares, “I am not ashamed of the

Gospel of Christ." He makes this declaration his every-day motto, and its sentiment inspires all his life-work as an apostle. When we, with Paul, test by experience its gracious provisions; when we carefully examine its doctrines; when we closely observe its elevating and purifying effect upon the lives and characters of men, we too may join heartily with him in saying, "I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth." A careful and unprejudiced examination of the Gospel affords good grounds for such confidence.

I. IT IS FOUNDED UPON THE REASONABLE AND CERTAIN TRUTH THAT THERE IS ONE GOD WHO IS THE FATHER OF US ALL. In this fact there is nothing of which any man should be ashamed.

Every house should be builded upon a sure and steadfast foundation. If it be built upon the sand, it will fall when the rains descend and when the floods come. The superstructure may be ever so costly and picturesque; its halls and chambers may be adorned with paintings and finely carved furniture; its towers may be imposing and its battlements pleasing to the eye; but if its foundation is insecure, no one will desire to make it his dwelling place. Its richly furnished apartments will not allay the fear of danger or give confidence in its stability. The same thing is true of every system of faith or philosophy. The world wants to be assured that it is well-founded. If the principle on which it is builded is not true; if its underlying premise is in-

correct, its conclusions will not be accepted, its teachings and promises will be discarded, and its precepts ignored. No confidence would then be given to its pretense of affording happiness here or hereafter. Men might then readily be ashamed to profess a belief in its theories or an acceptance of its doctrines. The want of truth in the foundation insures weakness to every part of the superstructure. But the Christian temple is builded upon a solid rock. The Gospel of Christ in all its parts, in all its provisions and precepts and promises, is founded upon the great basal truth that there is one God who is the Creator of all things. He is the fountain whence flows the stream of Gospel salvation. His love provided a Savior. His voice announces to man the good news. His grace operates upon the believing heart, changing it from a state of sin and guilt to one of peace and holiness. The Gospel is Divine. It is God's own handiwork. On the eternal truth that God is, is this glorious temple builded. No man ever enters its door or approaches its altars without faith in God. No man is ever clothed in its beautiful apparel but by the hand of God. The light of the Divine countenance shines all along the way of salvation. The glory of his presence overshadows all the workings of saving grace. All the doctrines and ordinances of the Gospel bear the seal of the Divine hand. On the great truth that there is one God who is the Father of us all is safely founded the glorious Gospel of our salvation.

Compare this answer of the Gospel to the question, "Whence are all things?" with the answer of every other system of faith or philosophy, and how much more reasonable, how much more excellent doth it appear!

Take the theory of the old Pantheist. He ascribed to many gods the creation of the many different things in the world. He argued that as every effect must have a cause, and as there are many effects manifested in the world, there must therefore be many gods causing these effects and bringing different events into existence. His system of faith embraced deities innumerable. He had a god for the land and a god for the sea; a god for the hills and a god for the valleys; a god for the day and a god for the night; a god of war and a god of peace. He had great gods and little gods, good gods and bad gods. Sometimes his gods would become jealous of each other; sometimes they would love each other; and at other times they would engage in deadly war with each other. To each one of these gods temples were erected, sacrifices and prayers were offered at their altars. But nowhere, neither among the philosophers of Greece, or the rich devotees at Rome, or among the most benighted of pagan tribes, did polytheism make man any better or more noble, or endow the worshipers at its shrines with a spirit of peace and happiness. On the other hand, the Christian recognizes the existence of many effects wrought by many causes operating in the world; but through all these causes and

effects he sees evidence of one designing Mind, the work of one creating and controlling Hand; and back through them all he is clearly led to the Great First Cause, to God, the Almighty Maker of all things; to the all-wise, the loving God of the Gospel. Which of these two systems of faith is the more reasonable? Of which would you be ashamed?

Take the theory of the fatalist. With him everything is the result of chance. Everything has just happened to be; or everything has by chance been evolved out of something else. The modern term of spontaneous generation expresses about the same idea that the old fatalist held. According to this new form of fatalism one generation of one kind has, without any designing mind, produced another generation of an entirely different kind. This theory of chance was in olden times the faith of many minds. It occupied a prominent place in ancient human philosophy. Even to-day you may find traces of the same theory among many people. Men who talk of luck in business, of events happening, of good or bad fortune as their lot, have in their minds the idea that chance is an acting force, that their success or failure is produced by fate. But what is chance, or fate, that imaginary force to which is ascribed creative and controlling power? Where does it dwell, or how does it wield its scepter? One, in burlesque, gives a brief epitome of this whole theory. By chance, he says, a ball of soft matter took its place in the heavens and commenced revolving on its axis. This was the begin-

ning of the existence of the earth. By chance a small portion of this matter was jostled loose from the ball, and that particle by chance became a turtle, the first of the animal kingdom. By chance the turtle stretched out its head too far and it became a serpent. By chance the serpent raised its head aloft, and somehow turned to a monkey. By chance the monkey made a step upward and turned to a baboon. By chance the baboon lost part of its hairy covering and became a Negro; and by chance the Negro got badly affrighted and turned to a white man. Thus, by chance, by fate, by spontaneous generation, all things exist. You and I are not ready to give our belief to any such theory. But in such fallacies and vagaries of thought must all, who deny the existence and creative power of the one Almighty, find a hiding place. How can men possessing brilliancy of intellects and well-cultured minds find freedom from superstition and liberty of thought in such empty dogmas? Much more reasonable, much more noble, much more worthy of reception are the simple teachings of Christian philosophy. You need not go, to realize this fact, to those who are learned in doctrine and wise in theology, in drawing the contrast. In order to see the greater excellency of the Gospel you may select the simplest illustration. Go to the little Sabbath-school girl who has learned the first lessons in the story of Jesus and His saving love. Direct her eye to the blades of grass that, like a green carpet, skirt her pathway. Ask her, "Did chance make the grass

to grow!" She will modestly but firmly answer you, "No, sir!" Point to the spreading forest-trees that, in their native beauty, wave their boughs about her father's farm, and ask her, "Did chance make the trees to grow; did chance fashion their leaves; did chance paint their blossoms, or load them with fruit?" She will earnestly answer you, "No, sir." Point to the clouds that float along the azure sky, and ask her, "Did chance give to the clouds their silvery wings and golden hue, and send them, like things of life, through the air?" She will firmly answer you, "No, sir!" Direct her eyes to the suns and stars that so brightly adorn the evening sky, and ask her, "Did chance make these shining orbs and appoint their places in the heavens?" She will quickly answer you, "No, sir." "Who, then, made all the wonderful things in the heavens above and on the earth beneath?" Her simple answer will be: "It was God. God made the suns and stars, and hung them in the sky. God made the clouds and caused them to fly through the air. God made the trees to grow, the flowers to bloom, and the grass to cover the hills and the valleys. God made everything." And her answer will have in it more solid reason and good philosophy than the most subtle argument of the Pantheist, or the most ironical philippics of the Agnostic. Reason and revelation both attest the truth of this great foundation doctrine of the Gospel, and you and I have no need to be ashamed of it.

II. THE DOCTRINE OF THE HYPOSTATIC UNION IS TAUGHT IN THE GOSPEL: that in Jesus Christ the Divine and human nature were united, and, as such, He becomes man's Mediator. Is there anything in this truth of which man may be ashamed?

The mind of man may not be able to comprehend the mystery of this union or explain how the Son of God could take upon Himself the form of a servant. But while human reason can not explain how the Godhead manifested Himself bodily in the person of Jesus Christ, there is no cause for rejecting it as a fact, or of being ashamed of the truth revealed. Such a wonderful revelation to the world is for man's good as well as for the glory of God.

It may be supposed that the union of the Divine and human natures in one person must necessarily have been derogatory to the Divine character, and therefore impossible and untrue. But the life and works of Jesus Christ show such supposition to be groundless. The attributes both of humanity and Divinity are revealed in His person in all their perfection. Purity is one of the attributes of God; the life of Jesus was pure. While man is naturally sinful and impure, the humanity of the Christ had no blemish. Though tempted like we are, yet He was "without sin." He was "an Israelite indeed in whom there was no guile." His bitterest enemies could find no fault in Him. He was "glorious in His apparel;" His life was free from evil and perfectly holy. Omniscience is one of God's attributes.

Jesus possessed perfect knowledge; He knew the very thoughts of those around him—a heart knowledge that belongs to the Divine only. Omnipotence is an attribute of God; Jesus possessed all power. He touched the eye of the blind, and sight was restored. He rebuked the incurable disease of leprosy, and the leper was made whole. He commanded the storm-tossed sea to be still, and there was a great calm. He spoke to the sleeping dead; they heard his voice and came back to life. All the Divine attributes shine forth in undiminished splendor in the words, the works, and the life of Jesus the Christ.

Again, this manifestation of the Godhead in the person of Jesus enables man to approach God intelligently. We are commanded to “worship God.” But God is a Spirit; how shall we worship Him? Man can not apprehend or understand his own spirit. He knows by revelation that he has a soul, but its nature and very being are beyond the touch of his senses. How can he know or offer acceptable service to God unless by some manifestation He reveals Himself. The Jews were assured of His presence when they beheld His glory overshadowing the mercy-seat. The heathen made gods of wood and stone, and offered to them their sacrifices because they could see them and touch them. The superstitious papist would worship the Great Spirit in images and paintings and the crucifix. But we have no need to seek God in wood or stone or crucifix. Jesus has become the Daysman, the Me-

diator between God and man. "In Him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." We can hear His voice; we can see His form; we can feel His human sympathy; we can witness His wondrous dying love. Through Him we may look up to our Divine Father. By the hand of His humanity He can lead us to God. Through Him and by His merits we can love, adore, and worship God in spirit and in truth. No need of idol or image or crucifix on which to fix our gaze, but, "ever looking unto Jesus," we may behold the real presence of the Divine glory, and by Him be led from darkness and sin to light, to holiness, and to heaven. There is not a single feature of this truth that should cause the cheek to blush with shame.

III. IN THE GOSPEL IS PROVIDED AN ATONEMENT FOR SIN, AND MAN MAY BE SAVED. "It is the power of God unto salvation."

Consciousness and revelation clearly show man's guilt; that he has committed sin; that he has violated the Divine law, and is under God's condemnation. The penalty of the broken law is death, and justice demands that the penalty be inflicted. How can the requirements of the law be satisfied and man be saved? He has no merit of his own to plead, nothing with which to pay the price of his redemption. If he could or would repent of his transgressions, mere repentance would not atone for his sins or amend the broken law. The criminal

may be arrested and condemned, and though he is ever so sorry for the deeds he has done, his sorrow will not pay the debt he owes or blot out the fact of his guilt. The granting of pardon by the officers of the law to every one guilty, because he is sorry for his crime, would overthrow government and destroy all law. There is no promise of pardon for the guilty in all the realm of nature. You will find law everywhere, and to each law is added a penalty; he that violates the laws of nature must suffer the penalty. The man who thrusts his hand into the fire must endure the pain brought on by that act, though he repents of it with tears and groans. He that drinks from the cup of poison will die, though in the paroxysms of his last hour he deeply deploras his fatal deed. How shall man's sins against God be pardoned? How can his guilt be removed? How can man be saved? How can God be just, and yet forgive the sinner? This was the problem of the ages. It was the question which human philosophy could not answer, and doubtless engaged the most earnest study of angelic minds. But the Gospel comes with glad tidings to man. Jesus the Christ, has in letters of blood, wrought out the solution. He has offered Himself as a sin-offering. He has paid the price of human redemption. He has voluntarily died in man's stead. He has made an atonement for the sins of the world, and man is now able to repent and live. Since the voice of the suffering, dying Son of God cried out upon the cross, "It is finished!"

salvation has been provided for man, and he can now by faith sing:

“There is a fountain filled with blood
Drawn from Immanuel’s veins;
And sinners, plunged beneath that flood,
Lose all their guilty stains.”

While the believing penitent finds pardon and peace by believing in Jesus, who loved him and gave Himself for him; while the Christian rejoices in the cleansing power of His shed blood, Infidelity stands at the door making every possible effort to turn away the heart from this loving Savior. It scornfully says to the Christian, “You trust in One for an inheritance who was so poor that He had no home of His own.” But the Christian, without a blush of shame, replies, “It is true that Jesus was poor, and had not where to lay His head; but He voluntarily became poor that through His poverty I might be made rich.” Again, Infidelity deridingly says: “You accept of Jesus as your King, and yet the crown He wore was made of thorns, and placed on His head by the hands of a mob. What power has He to defend and protect you?” But the Christian replies, “It is true that Jesus wore a crown of thorns, one that was placed on His head by the hands of His enemies; but He willingly wore that rough crown that pierced His brow that He might gain for me a crown of immortality and eternal life.” Infidelity tauntingly derides the Christian for trusting in

Jesus for blessings in this life and triumph over death, who was Himself overcome by death. But the Christian is not ashamed to reply, "It is true that Jesus died, that He died the ignominious death of the cross; but He died voluntarily to obtain pardon and peace and life for me." Infidelity asks, "How can you trust in Jesus as one that is able to save from the guilt and effects of sin, who was Himself wrapped in grave clothes and laid in the tomb?" But the Christian answers: "It is true Jesus' body was laid in the sepulcher; but His stay there was very brief. When He had perfumed the grave where His saints should sleep, He conquered death, He arose in triumph from the dead, and brought the resurrection to light." After all the sneers and taunts of Infidelity are passed, the Christian, with a glad heart and a countenance radiant with joy, is still ready to say, "I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation."

IV. IN THE GOSPEL IS POWER SUFFICIENT TO SAVE THE WORLD. It affords salvation "to every one that believeth."

The work of lifting a fallen race is one of vast magnitude. To impart to man a new heart and a new nature, and to enable him to live a new life, exceeds the possibilities of human genius and human power. To remove the burden of guilt from a single soul, to lift him from the degradations of sin and develop in him a holy manhood, demands

power Divine. That same Power that created the heavens and earth is needed to make him a new man. That same Power that fashioned the universe and controls its forces is required to purify his heart and to inspire his affections. That same Power that can release the earth from the icy grasp of winter and impart to it the life and growth of springtime, is necessary to arouse man from spiritual death to spiritual life. The Gospel comes with this power of God unto salvation, and has always proven successful. Saul of Tarsus, a bigoted Jew, a ceremonial Pharisee, a persecutor of the disciples of Jesus, fell prostrate before that power, and was wholly changed in heart and thought and life. The proud and cruel and guilty was made humble and gentle and loving. The leader in persecuting God's people became an active and earnest instrument in building up the Church. The Gospel has been efficient in power to save both Jew and Gentile. It has lighted up the dark valleys of Paganism; it has overturned idols of wood and stone, and led heathen tribes to the shrines of the true God; it has broken the bonds of slave and serf, and made men free; it has promulgated righteous laws, and peace, and prosperity among the nations; it has added luster to the coronets of princes, and made the light to shine in the homes of peasants; it has builded schoolhouses and colleges for mental culture, and provided asylums for the weak and the unfortunate; it has promoted a higher civilization among peoples and nations; and it has proven a fountain of joy to

the sad, a healing balm to the suffering, an inspirer of hope to the dying. Like a mighty lever, as it is, placed beneath the earth, it is lifting the world up to God, to holiness and to heaven. Who would be ashamed of such a glorious Gospel? Who would blush to acknowledge its precious influence? Who would not, at all times and in all places, testify to its saving power?

An incident narrated in my presence when but a boy led me to make the language of the text the motto of my life. A family, composed of father, mother, and an only daughter, lived in the eastern part of our country. They were quite wealthy, moved in the higher circles of society, but were skeptical in regard to the Christian religion. The Bible occupied no place in the family circle, and prayer and praise to God were not heard in their home. The daughter, the idol of her parents, was brought up to seek her greatest happiness in scenes of festivity and rounds of gay and worldly pleasure. To secure a finished education she was sent to a school in a neighboring city. One day, as she returned from recitation, she passed the door of a house of worship in which a revival of religion was in progress. Curiosity led her to enter the Church. The scene before her was novel and impressive. The earnest prayers offered, the fervent words of exhortation, and the songs of praise arrested her thoughts; and the acceptance of offers of mercy by some of her classmates touched her heart. She, too, was soon found among those who were pleading

for pardon. It was not long before she rejoiced in forgiving grace and was very happy in her new experience. She hastened to write to her parents to tell them the good news. The letter was received, but instead of being a message of joy to their hearts, it was one of surprise and sadness. They felt that Mary's profession of religion would be her ruin and their disgrace in the eyes of their fashionable associates. She was immediately called home, her grievous step was pointed out, and her parents most earnestly urged her to give up all thought of being a Christian. Her warm love for her parents was only intensified by her love of Christ; but to their urgent pleadings she meekly replied that she could not deny her loving Savior or turn from His joyful service. As a last effort her parents invited her former gay companions to spend with her an evening in social festivities, hoping by their influence to lead her to give up her religious profession. Her young friends came with joyful greetings, and entered with gayety into the revelry and amusement of other days. When her father saw the good cheer that characterized every word and act of his daughter, and the happy smile that played upon her countenance, he thought he had fully accomplished the purpose he desired. He requested her to perform on the instrument of music some wild melody, as she had formerly done, and sing for the entertainment of the happy company. Without any hesitation, she went forward, and as she took her place at the piano her father's heart was filled with delight. But

as she touched the keys of the instrument a cloud of disappointment overshadowed his face. The notes that fell upon his ear were those of a sacred tune instead of the wild melody she had played in other days. Accompanying the music with a sweet and tender voice she sang :

“No room for mirth or trifling here,
For worldly hope, or worldly fear,
 If life so soon is gone ;
If now the Judge stands at the door,
And all mankind must stand before
 The inexorable throne !”

Surprise and dismay were manifest on every countenance. Some of the young company hastily left the room. But more earnestly and tenderly she sang on :

“No matter which my thoughts employ,
A moment’s misery or joy ;
 But O, when both shall end,
Where shall I find my destined place ?
Shall I my everlasting days
 With fiends or angels spend ?

Jesus, vouchsafe a pitying ray ;
Be Thou my guide, be Thou my way
 To endless happiness ;
Ah ! write Thy pardon on my heart,
And whenso’er I hence depart,
 Let me depart in peace.”

As the last words fell from her lips and the last notes died away, she turned from the instrument

with moistened eyes and loving mien. Her father and mother were weeping by her side, and many of her young friends were shedding tears. It was not long before her parents made profession of the same religion that she professed, and became earnest and faithful Christians. Many of her young associates experienced the same peace and joy that she had experienced, and walked with her in the same glad way. In the hour of greatest trial she was "not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ."

Christian, always hold aloft your banner, unfurled to the breeze, bearing upon its folds your motto, "I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ." Young men and maidens, old and young, rich and poor, let the words of the apostle be the language of your heart always: "I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth."

XII.

SEEK YE FIRST THE KINGDOM OF GOD.

“Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.”—MATT. VI, 33.

JESUS knew the hearts of men. As they listened to His teaching He perceived their inmost thoughts and anxieties. He saw how they were troubled about the things of this life. What shall we eat, or what shall we drink, or wherewithal shall we be clothed? were questions that constantly caused them to worry. Fears were continually arising that tomorrow would come and find them in want. He reproves them for this great anxiety of mind about supplies of temporal benefits; He refers to the fowls of the air, that neither sow, nor reap, nor gather into barns, yet God feedeth them; and to the lilies of the field, that neither toil nor spin, and yet are arrayed in more beautiful raiment than kings put on. He assures them that their Heavenly Father knoweth what they need. They should cease their great anxiety about things of this life, and “seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things should be added unto them.”

The term kingdom of God is sometimes applied

in Scripture to His universal empire and dominion over all creatures; sometimes it is employed to designate the Gospel dispensation, but as used in the text it doubtless means the work of grace in the believing heart, the forgiveness of sin and adoption into God's family. The term "His righteousness" can not mean the absolute righteousness of God, for that is not attainable by man; but rather the entire cleansing of man's heart or that "holiness without which no man shall see the Lord." Pardon for sin, adoption into God's family, and purity of heart are therefore presented as that which man should possess. Including all this work of grace in man's heart under the term "the religion of the Lord Jesus Christ," we may read the text, "Seek ye first the religion of Christ; and all these things shall be added unto you."

I. THE DUTY PRESENTED: Seek the religion of the Lord Jesus Christ.

God has provided salvation for man by the gift of His Son. He has sent the Holy Spirit to apply saving grace to the believing heart. He has promised rich and glorious rewards to those who accept of this salvation. But after all His gracious provisions, after He has shown His intense desire that man might be saved, the responsibility for the results is laid at man's door. Salvation is possible, but the eyes must be opened to behold its brightness, the heart must be willing to accept of its joys.

The supplies of grace are in abundance, but man must make application for them at God's storehouse. Hence the earnest words of the Savior, "Seek ye the kingdom of God and His righteousness."

But, you ask me, why should I seek religion? To do so requires sacrifice, a forsaking of sin, the giving up of sinful pleasure, the subduing of sinful passions, and the casting out of sinful pride. Why should I make such a sacrifice? To do so also demands a life of religious consecration, a faithful performance of religious duty, a constant devotion to religious service. Why should I take upon me the bearing of such a burden? It must be admitted that to be a follower of Christ requires one to make sacrifices and to bear crosses; and if no good reason can be found for assuming such duties, man as a moral being may well refuse to submit to such demands. But if the reasons are many and weighty, if there are incentives presented strong and convincing, then there should be a ready acquiescence with the invitation, and every one should earnestly seek the religion of Christ. Reasons sufficient are afforded to incite to decisive action.

1. The possession of this religion is necessary in order that we may be able to obey the commands of God. All admit that it is the duty of man to obey God's commands; that whatever precepts He has given should be faithfully performed. Men may differ in their belief and opinions as to what are God's commands. But let any law bear the seal

of the Divine hand, whether it is written in the book of nature or in the book of Revelation, then every one but an Atheist will hold that it should be obeyed. To do this, we claim, there is necessary the enabling power of the religion of Christ. Without that help, man must fail. Take, as an illustration, the duty to love God. This duty is expressly given in His Word: "Thou shalt love God with thy whole heart." Not only is this command made known in the Bible, it may be clearly inferred from the dictates of reason. If we have been created by Him, if His blessings are continually showered upon us; if day and night, if seed time and harvest, are the results of laws which He has established, then the conclusion is clear that we should love Him. Not only does the Christian accept this law of love as obligatory; so also does the skeptic, who only worships God at the shrines of nature. Now, can the natural man obey this law? Paul says the "carnal mind is enmity to God; it is not subject to His law, neither indeed can be." The carnal mind, man in his natural condition, "is enmity," not only at enmity, but possessing in his heart enmity itself to God, hatred to the Divine Being, and it can not obey His law. The teachings of nature attest the same fact. The conduct, the words, and the acts of men around us indicate very clearly a want of reverence for God. Our own consciousness gives proof that the natural man does not love God. The carnal mind denies His authority. The heart unsaved possesses an inborn hatred to things holy.

Our wills rebel against Divine control. Enmity to God and His law is the native condition of the human heart. In order, therefore, that we may obey God's law and love Him, our hearts must be changed. But how shall that change be made? No fountain of earth, though its waters be as clear as crystal, sends forth a stream that can purify the heart, or wash away its enmity. The lessons of human philosophy and the pages of scientific truth fail to present a formula by which to develop in man's soul love for God. The schools of the world can devise no course of study that will educate a mind that is enmity to be a mind that is love. A change is necessary. "Ye must be born again." And that change is only found at the cross of Christ; that change is only wrought by the Spirit of God; that change is only promised by the religion of the Lord Jesus Christ. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away, and all things have become new;" and in that new creation is love for God, and power given to obey His commands.

2. Upon the possession of the religion of Christ depend the most important interests of man. Its possession proves a safeguard against the evils of this world. Temptation to commit sin is met at almost every step of life. Allurements to the paths of wickedness are addressed to every heart. The siren voice of sinful pleasure speaks invitingly to every ear. The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, the lust of the mind, lead only in the way of dan-

ger. Pitfalls of iniquity abound on every hand. Evil habits are ready to bind man as a slave to evil-doing. For safety he needs the constant guidance of the Spirit of truth and the sustaining power of the grace of God. These are only afforded him by the religion of Christ. Its possession insures triumph in the last conflict. All men are mortal. Each one is awaiting the closing of the day. When the shadows of night begin to fall about us, earthly fountains will fail to afford any stream of joy. Riches and honors will not be able to dispel the darkness of that hour, nor can earthly genius extract the sting of death. All the light that this world can give will not cast one ray across the dark valley. Only in the Christian religion can be found peace and hope and triumph in that last conflict. It alone can give solace in the hour of death; it alone can soften the dying pillow. Without it, life goes out in hopeless darkness; but with it, the soul renews its vigor and strength, and is crowned with immortality.

Its possession is a sure title to happiness in the life to come. All that we know of the future world is what is revealed to us in the Bible. We learn there the final destiny of the just and the unjust. For the wicked is reserved banishment from the presence of God and from the glory of His power. To the righteous are given promises of mansions in glory, crowns that will not fade, and life that is eternal. The gaining of that happy land, the receiving of those glorious rewards, as well as the

shunning of a world of woe, depend upon the possession of the religion of Christ. Why should one seek this religion? Man's greatest interests in this life and in the life to come; reasons as high as heaven and as deep as hell; incentives unmeasured by time and lasting as eternity,—all urge him to “seek the kingdom of God and His righteousness.”

II. THE WORDS OF THE SAVIOR PRESENT THIS AS MAN'S FIRST DUTY. “Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness.”

You will find very few persons who do not admit the importance of seeking religion. They believe that its possession is necessary for future happiness; and their intention is, before the close of life, to give to its requirements serious thought. They do not aim to meet death or enter eternity without such preparation. They intend to seek the religion of the Lord Jesus Christ, but not now. When they get older; when they accumulate more property; when they have attained to higher positions of honor; when they have enjoyed for a time the rounds of worldly pleasure; when plans of business have been more fully accomplished; after awhile,—they will turn their thoughts to religion. But the Great Teacher rebukes this spirit of procrastination, and calls for immediate action. Religion is to be given the foremost place in our thoughts and desires. It is to be preferred to all other things. It is to be earnestly sought for before the days of youth are gone; before business plans have been

made; before wealth or honor have been acquired; even before beginning to labor for food and raiment, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness."

1. One substantial reason is presented in the text: "All these things shall be added unto you." Its possession will aid in obtaining those things which are needful in this life. Jesus, in these words, does not promise His followers large worldly possessions. He does not say that religion will make a man a millionaire, or insure him a palace in which to dwell. He does not say that it will array him in the robe of a prince or place on his head the crown of a king. "These things shall be added unto you;" things necessary for the sustenance of life. The religion of the Gospel will prevent the worry of heart and anxiety of mind for food and raiment. It will insure the watch-care and blessings of your Heavenly Father, who feeds the fowls of the air and paints the lily of the field. It will prove a certain title to what is necessary to sustain life.

You may ask, How will religion affect the supplies of temporal good? How does it insure its possessor food and clothing? How shall "these things be added unto you?"

In the first place it imparts the principles of industry and economy. Any man, possessed of a sound mind and a sound body, practicing upon these principles, will seldom fail to have bread and apparel. The precepts of the Christian religion make a man economical. Sin is wasteful. Sinful habits

are extravagant. The indulgence of sinful appetites or unholy lusts is expensive. The gratification of impure desires and the pursuit of worldly pleasure require large outlays of funds. The prodigal son wastes his substance in riotous living. A young man soon squanders his fortune with drink, with cards, or by other sinful indulgences. Loose rein given to unbridled lust soon ends in poverty. The religion of Christ restrains from evil habits, curbs the wanton desires of the human heart, and prevents the outlay for sin's expensive demands. It is saving of health, it is economical of expenditure, and it leads man to appreciate the value of temporal mercies. Again, this religion encourages a spirit of industry. It wakens up man's nobler ambition and imparts energy and activity to body and mind. The truly religious man is an industrious man. You may say: "That certainly can not be so. Such a statement is incorrect. Religion must fail in making its possessor industrious, for that neighbor of mine is very religious, but he is the laziest man in all the community." There must be some mistake about this case. Either your neighbor is not lazy, or else he is not a Christian. For when religion gets into the heart it drives laziness out; when laziness gets into the heart it drives religion out. The two can not dwell together in the same heart, no more than light and darkness can dwell together in the same room. The Word of God enjoins the improvement of the time. It impressively commands, "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it

with thy might." It holds all to strict accountability for the improvement of every passing moment. The religion of Christ inspires a spirit of industry and economy. Now, if a man, with healthy body and right mind, be industrious and economical, he will not starve for want of bread or perish for want of clothing. Engaged in any worthy occupation in life, if he is industrious and economical, "these things will be added unto him." If he be only a sawer of wood he will have bread to eat and raiment to put on. Religion will help in business. A large stock of it always on hand will increase the comforts of life. It is of great commercial value to every man.

It also provides help in time of need. Take that man whose physical powers are weakened by disease. He is too feeble to work, and his income has ceased. He is a deeply pious man and well known for his upright character. How can the promise be verified in his case, you may ask, and all "these things be added unto him?" How can his wants be met? It may truly be said, the promise will not fail. Though he can not gain a livelihood by his own hands, he will not be permitted to suffer. Every Christian heart in his neighborhood will sympathize with him. Every Christian hand will be open to supply his necessities; and the large-hearted men of the world, those who are not professed Christians, will come, saying, "This is a good man; he is a worthy man; he must not be left without help." They, too, will readily assist in meeting his wants.

He will not be permitted to starve for food or perish with the cold for want of raiment. "These things will be added to him."

But you may select an extreme case. Take that pious, earnest Christian man aboard some vessel on the high seas. The vessel is driven by the storm upon breakers, is fearfully wrecked, and he is cast ashore on some desert land. You ask, How could this promise then be fulfilled? I would candidly answer that I can not tell just how God would take care of one of His faithful children in such dire extremity. Yet we know he would not be forgotten. Many years ago, when consuming drouth caused fearful famine in the land of Israel, the prophet of God took refuge in the rocky hillside where there was no food. But he was not permitted to starve. God commanded the ravens to carry bread to him each day until the famine ended. To this faithful one on the barren shore God might send bread by swift-winged birds, or provide for him in a thousand other ways. Anyhow the Divine watch-care would be over him till his life-work was done; and then a convoy of angels would be commissioned to bear him on high to that land where the inhabitants never hunger any more, nor thirst any more.

2. Again, we should seek religion first, because it is of more value than anything else. We need not depreciate the value of earthly things. All the blessings God bestows should be highly prized. Has he given you a cheerful home and loving friends? Has he intrusted you with large wealth

or great honor? Has He endowed you with strong intellectual powers or a brilliant genius? Has He surrounded you with all the earthly comforts that heart could wish? Your bosom should swell with gratitude, and each blessing should be esteemed at its highest value. But placing the highest estimate possible upon earthly benefits; putting them all in the scale, the religion of the Gospel outweighs them all. It is of the greatest value; it should be sought for first. It gives more peace and joy to the heart in health or in sickness than all else can afford. It imparts brighter hopes in sorrow and separations. It lights up our skies when our sun is going down. It takes away the sting of death, and gives victory over the grave. When we have to give up all of earthly good; when we have to lay aside the gold, the lands, the associations, the homes of this world; when we have to bid farewell to all our earthly friends and go down into the dark valley bereft and alone, this religion will still be ours to sustain and give comfort. It will afford us an abundant entrance into the Paradise of God, and an inheritance that is incorruptible and that passeth not away.

3. We should seek religion first, because life is uncertain. If it be of so great value, and if this life, the time for obtaining it, is uncertain, how important that it should engage our first thoughts and employ our first efforts! The uncertainty of life, you may reply, is the plea that always comes from the preacher to arouse man's fear. But is it not true that life is uncertain? Is it not a fact that we have

no certain length of days to live? The present only is ours; we have no title-deed to the months or years to come. We may lay plans for a long life; we may build castles in the air which we expect to occupy in the future; we may, in our visions, look for pleasures and wealth and honors to come; but often, before our dreams are ended, the summons falls upon our ears and life ends. Seldom does a day dawn that does not pass away with the tolling of the funeral bell. Scarcely a family circle can be found but has in it a vacant chair. Few pass by you in the walks of life who do not wear the weeds of mourning. All these tell us in words of deepest solemnity, "Human life is uncertain." The hills and valleys are dotted over with graveyards, and every tombstone repeats, "Human life is uncertain." As you walk along the paths of the cemetery and note on the gravestone the name of one who lived to be fourscore years of age or more, you may say, "See here, this man lived to a good old age, and yet you say human life is uncertain." Yes, this is the grave of a man full of years. But to the right of that old man's grave sleeps the body of a bright young man who was just entering upon the busy work of life when disease touched his sprightly form and he lay down to die. On the other side of that old man's grave is that of a girl who was just blushing into womanhood, when the rose faded from her cheek and she closed her eyes in death. And right at the foot of that old man's grave is a little mound, the sleeping-place of a prattling child. It had just

smiled up into its loving mother's face, and then, like a fragile flower, faded away and fell to the earth. Every grave, every tombstone, every tolling bell, every vacant chair, every weed of mourning, every tear that falls from the orphan's eye, every sigh that escapes from the parents' bosom,—all, in one sad yet harmonious strain, tell us "human life is uncertain." And O! if life so soon may end, how important that we be ready! If the summons may come at noonday or midnight, how important it is that we have our lamps trimmed and our lights burning! If at any hour the Bridegroom may come, how important it is that we have on the wedding garment, that we may go in with him to the marriage supper. Life and death, things present and things to come, time and eternity, join in the wise, the timely, the tender words of Jesus, saying, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness."

Possessing in our hearts the blessed hope which the Gospel inspires, it matters not when the Master may call for us. We need not fear. From the possession of this precious religion on earth we shall go to its richer enjoyment in heaven.

XIII.

EDOM'S CONQUEROR.

“Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? this that is glorious in his apparel, traveling in the greatness of his strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save. Wherefore art thou red in thine apparel, and thy garments like him that treadeth in the winefat? I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the people there was none with me, for I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury; and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment. For the day of vengeance is in mine heart, and the year of my redeemed has come.”—ISA. LXIII, 1-4.

OBJECT lessons are frequently employed in the Old Testament Scriptures in presenting Divine truth. God made revelations to man in types, in symbols, and in visions. By such means He declared His will, gave assurance of blessings, and foretold the plan provided for the salvation of the world. The ladder which Jacob saw in his night visions, on which the angels were seen ascending and descending, was a promise of God's watch-

care over him in his future journeys. Moses beheld in the burning bush on the mountain side an emblem of Israel in great trouble, but unconsumed. The sacrifices offered on the altars of the tabernacle in the wilderness and of the temple on Mount Moriah were types of that greater sacrifice to be offered, the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. In the figurative language of the text we have presented one of these most impressive and interesting object lessons.

The prophet, having ascended the mount of inspiration and looking towards the south, beholds one advancing from the land of Edom. His appearance is that of a prince marching forth in triumph. In his wonder Isaiah cries out, "Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah?" The voice of the oncoming hero answers in the distance, "I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save." As he draws nearer the prophet inquires, "Wherefore art thou red in thine apparel, and thy garments like him that treadeth in the winefat?" The tender, yet impressive, reply is made, "I have trodden the winepress alone, and of the people there was none with me." And upon the ear of the enraptured prophet, as the vision unfolds before his gaze, falls the earnest words of the Hero: "I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury; and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment. For the day of vengeance is in mine heart, and the year of my redeemed has come."

The inquiry naturally arises, To whom does this vision of Isaiah refer? Who is this that cometh from Edom? This prophecy has been interpreted by some writers as referring to one of the illustrious Jewish generals, who led forth their armies to victory over their enemies. Some have considered it a prophecy of the successes of John Hyrcanus; others have applied it to Judas Maccabæus or some other of the leaders of the Jews. But as successful as were these generals in overcoming their enemies, none of them in character or deeds can be identified with the Hero of Isaiah's vision. Here is a nobility of person, here is a battle waged, here is a victory gained, that indicate One greater than mere man. The Hero of whom Isaiah speaks was evidently Divine as well as human. The vision is doubtless a prophecy of Jesus the Christ, of the battle he waged against sin, and of the victory he obtained in behalf of man.

The land of Edom was inhabited by the bitter enemies of Israel. Bozrah was its chief city. These are used as types of the world possessed by the foes of truth and righteousness. The severe battle waged in the conquest of Edom, and the overthrow of Bozrah, refers to the fearful conflict in which Jesus engaged in providing redemption for man and His complete triumph over the forces of evil. He came into the world where sin reigned supreme; He engaged in mortal combat with the powers of unrighteousness; He attacked the strongholds of iniquity; He broke down the stone walls of Bozrah,

and though His body was severely wounded and His garments stained with blood, He triumphed gloriously, having taken vengeance on His enemies and brought redemption to His people. The Divine character of the Hero seen in the vision of the prophet, the intense suffering indicated, and the glorious triumph won, are fulfilled in the person and work of Jesus the Christ, the Savior of men. To Him the prophecy impressively directs our thoughts.

I. HIS EXALTED CHARACTER IS DECLARED: "Glorious in apparel, traveling in the greatness of His strength, mighty to save."

The prophet is excited to wonder and admiration by the appearance of the Hero in the vision. Looking through the mists about him by the aid of inspiration, he beholds the Son of God clad in all His glorious attributes, coming from the scene of conflict and suffering where He has obtained redemption for His people. With the prophet we also, by faith, may look upon Him "who loved us and gave Himself for us," and rejoice in the great salvation He has provided.

1. He is perfectly holy—"glorious in His apparel." The purity of His character and nature is indicated in these words. Sacred and profane writers very often speak of the raiment put on as descriptive of the character of the person. The base and groveling are presented as dressed in coarse and soiled garments; the cruel and vicious as wearing

clothes that are uncouth and forbidding; the upright and good as having on neat and beautiful raiment. We are very much accustomed to use the same figure of speech in forming our judgment of men. Our first opinion of a stranger is obtained from his outward appearance; we are apt to judge him by the clothes he wears. If we meet one clad in a rough blanket after the style of a savage, we conclude that he is a savage, and are inclined to shun his presence. If he is attired in exceedingly showy raiment, and decked with an unusual amount of gaudy ornaments, we pronounce him a "dude." But when a man appears in neat and appropriate clothing, though a stranger, he is received with respect and confidence. In some portions of the country the idea once prevailed that an unshaven face was characteristic of a gambler, a thief, or some other evil doer, and children would run affrighted from the presence of a man with a long beard. The times and fashions have now so changed that these fears are allayed, and the man with heavy beard is received into the best of society. Yet the outward appearance of the man, the kind of raiment he wears, go far in the mind in forming an estimate of his character.

The Hero of Isaiah's vision is "glorious in his apparel! He is characterized by purity of life and nobility of nature. He is arrayed in garments of holiness, and his robe bears the stamp of royalty. We have here a true prophecy of the character of Christ Jesus the Lord. He lived a holy life. His

words were always marked with purity. There was no guile found upon His lips; there was no blemish discovered in any of His works. His life was without sin. He was gentle and forgiving; He was full of sympathy for the sorrowing and of charity for the poor; He was jealous for the right, a teacher of the truth, and He ever went about doing good. No one of the great multitudes that thronged His way could point to any act of wrong-doing by Him. The Jews failed to find any one to testify against Him when He was arraigned before Pilate. After investigating all the charges which they alleged against Him, the Roman judge plainly said to them, "I find no fault in this man." The words that He had spoken, the doctrines that He had preached, and the works that He had performed, remained unimpeached by any witness, though His enemies made every effort to have Him condemned. He was "glorious in His apparel," and so His life and character stand before the world to-day. In all the passing centuries, unbelief, in its bitter and active opposition to Christianity, has been unable to find any blemish in His character. The chief of infidel writers, after employing his ready pen and large intellectual powers in opposition to the Christian religion and in denial of the Sonship of Christ and the saving power of His grace, after admitting the beauty of the life of Jesus and the purity of His character, makes this remarkable declaration in regard to His death: "Socrates died like a philosopher, but Jesus Christ like a God." Our blessed

Savior was "glorious in His apparel." Tempted as we are, He was without sin; holiness shone forth from His person, and righteousness mantled His whole being. His life was effulgent with Divine purity, and His character was truly that of the Son of God.

2. He was Divine. The prophet in his vision beholds this Hero "traveling in the greatness of His strength." These words may be rendered "traveling in the greatness of His own strength." All creature strength is derived strength. The power by which man thinks and speaks and acts is imparted power. Man often imagines that it is by his own unaided strength that he performs the works of life. The little child, after it has for the first time walked across the nursery floor, by its proud bearing seems to say, "I did that by my own power." The athletic youth boasts of the strength of his bone and sinew and muscle as self-derived. The mature man is proud of his physical powers and mental acumen, and claims all these as functions of his own creation. The general of an army ascribes his victories to his own wisely-laid plans; the discoverer of scientific truths claims these as wonders he has wrought out; and the successful man of business points to his gain of wealth as the result of his own devising, as the creations of his own genius. Yet all human strength is derived strength. "In God we live, and move, and have our being." He supports us by His hand when we walk; He gives us muscle and sinew and bone; He

endows us with minds for reasoning, for invention, and for meditation; He imparts to us every breath we draw and every beating pulse we tell. If He for a moment withdrew His supporting hand from beneath the violator of His laws, that sinful man would sink down utterly overwhelmed. All our strength is from God. But the Hero of Isaiah's vision comes from Edom, "traveling in the greatness of His own strength." The power He exercises is underived, the scepter He wields is Divine. The life and works of Jesus attest the truthfulness of this prophecy, and give full proof of His Divine Sonship. He taught with authority, and not as man teaches; He healed the leper who sought to be made whole; He opened the eyes of the blind man by the roadside; He made the deaf to hear and the dumb to speak; He calmed the storm-tossed sea by His simple command; at His word the dead arose to life again; He came in truth the Son of God, wielding a Divine scepter, "traveling in the greatness of His own strength."

3. He gives earnest warnings against sin: "I that speak in righteousness." He appears as the announcer of the righteousness of the Divine law and the upholder of the justice of the Divine government. Jesus came into the world on an errand of mercy. His mission was to save sinners, to set free those who were guilty and under condemnation. But He does not accomplish this by abrogating the law. He says, "Not one jot or tittle shall pass from the law till all be fulfilled." He makes

no effort to prevent the execution of the penalty of violated law, nor does He encourage sin by denying the claims of justice upon the sinner. He teaches that the law is right and the penalty is just. He holds that iniquity is evil, and that guilt should be punished. He does not attempt to conceal the terrors of the law or the fearful consequences of transgression. By the unrepealed penalty of the law against sin He warns the sinner. By the fearful doom of the finally impenitent He arouses to consciousness the spiritually dead. The Gospel comes as good news to a fallen race, but it gives no encouragement to a life of transgression. It is mercy speaking to man, yet it also declares that "the soul that sinneth it shall die." The whole plan of salvation is a merciful reproof of evil-doing, a tender, loving, forcible warning against the violation of the Divine law; and to every provision of grace, to every promise of salvation, are attached the earnest words of warning, "I that speak in righteousness," that, aroused from the sleep of sin, the sons of men may wake up to life.

4. He is "mighty to save." Although He announces the righteousness of the law man has violated and the justice of the dread penalty which man has incurred, yet He is "mighty to save." Man had sinned, and was righteously condemned. Justice sternly demanded the execution of the penalty. In such a condition what could man do to be saved? How could the claims of the law be met and man still live? How could God be just, and yet forgive

the sinner? This was a question that human reason could not answer; this was a problem that the angels, though earnestly desiring to look into it, could not solve. A sacrifice was necessary, but man had no suitable sacrifice to offer. A substitute for the guilty was required, but who would become that substitute? A propitiation for sin alone could give hope, but where could a propitiation be found? Man was guilty. Man was already condemned. Death was the penalty of the broken law, and the time for the execution of that penalty was at hand. How could guilty man escape? Where was help to be obtained? There seemed to be no refuge for him. Hope died within him. His soul was sinking down into the depths of despair, when, lo! there was heard the voice of Immanuel saying, "I that speak in righteousness" am "mighty to save."

"With pitying eye the Prince of Peace
Beheld our helpless grief;
He saw, and O, amazing love!
He flew to our relief."

He voluntarily becomes our sin-offering and suffers the penalty of the broken law in our stead. He is the propitiation for our sins, and by His death He atones for all mankind. In letters of blood He solves the problem of man's salvation, and now God may be just and yet forgive the sinner. On the rugged heights of Calvary He lays the hand of His Divinity upon the throne of God, and with the hand of His humanity He grasps the world broke loose

and flying away into outer darkness, and uniting upon his bosom the links of the chain severed by sin, in His passion on the cross, He welds them together with His heart's warm blood. Now man may look up, for help is found. Now man may go free, for the shackles of sin have been broken. Now man may rejoice, for a great salvation is provided. Jesus has solved the problem of the ages, and redeemed His people from condemnation and death. He has laid His mighty arm beneath a sinking world, and is able to lift it up to holiness, to heaven, and to God.

II. THE SUFFERINGS ENDURED IN PROVIDING SALVATION WERE GREAT.

The language of the prophecy indicates intense suffering: "I have trodden the winepress alone, and of the people there were none with me. I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury; and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment." The wearisome arduous work of treading the winepress, the severe conflict encountered, and the raiment all stained with blood, are expressive of great suffering. We may not be able to measure the intensity of agony prefigured in these words, or to tell how great were the sufferings of Jesus endured in our behalf, yet we may study with profit the tragic scene and be constrained more earnestly to adore Him "who loved us and gave Himself for us."

1. He suffered in His humiliation. How great

was the sacrifice He voluntarily made in man's behalf! He who had made the worlds; He whose scepter swayed the universe; He who was adored by angelic hosts; He who abode in the bosom of the Father, voluntarily laid aside His scepter, voluntarily put off the crown, voluntarily relinquished all the glory He had with the Father before the world began, took upon Himself the form of a servant, became obedient to the law, that He might redeem them that were under the law. He who possessed the wealth of the universe voluntarily became so poor that, while the foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests where they may lay their young, the Son of man had not where to lay His head. He who is to be man's Judge voluntarily submitted to be persecuted, to be despised, to be crucified by man. How deep His humiliation that he might become man's Savior!

2. He suffered in His rejection by the world. He came unto His own, but His own received Him not. His mission into the world was one of love for man. He came to seek and to save man; to redeem man from the curse of the law; to rescue man from certain death. But all His offers of help were rejected, His mission of love was treated with scorn, and the only greeting He received was the cruel cry of the mob, "Away with Him; crucify Him! crucify Him!" Ingratitude was all the return that humanity could make, ingratitude that doubtless, like a dagger, pierced His heart.

3. He suffered in the garden and on the cross.

Look upon Jesus yonder in Gethsemane at midnight's gloomy hour. The burden of a world's guilt presses heavily upon His bosom. Then, in the bitterness of His agony, He cries out, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death." His heart is ready to break with grief. "Being in agony, He prayed more earnestly; and His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground." The intense agony of soul caused the bursting of the veins of His body, and the great drops of blood to gush forth through the pores of the skin. There, at that chilly midnight hour, He stains all His raiment with His blood. Look upon Him as He hangs on yonder cross. How great the suffering which He is called to bear! If a fine needle pierces the palm of the hand it causes intense pain; but through the hands and feet of Jesus not a fine needle, but rough nails were driven with a hammer wielded by Roman soldiers. The cross to which He was bound was thrust rudely into the rocky crevice, and for three long hours He hung in agony. But He endured more than physical pain and mental anguish. His soul was rent with intense grief. The withdrawal of the Divinity extorted from Him the heart-rending cry, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" Having drunk the full cup of suffering, having measured the deepest depths of anguish, having experienced the heart-breaking pangs of grief, He bowed His head and gave up the ghost. Earth never witnessed a scene of greater suffering. How could humanity

look on unmoved? Who, standing by that cross, would not, with loving faith, accept of that Jesus as a Savior, and say to all, "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world?"

4. He suffered alone. "I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the people there was none with Me." In making a propitiation for the sins of the world, neither men nor angels could have afforded any help. They were all under law, and to meet the demands of that law required the exercise of all the powers they possessed. No creature had aught with which to pay the price of man's redemption, or was able to make atonement for his sin. Jesus alone could accomplish this work. But in another sense assistance might have been given. When He came unto His own the world might have received Him with a glad welcome. While He journeyed in weariness among men, the world might have afforded Him a pillow on which to rest His head. While He drank in agony the cup of sorrow for man, the world might have given Him its sympathy and its love. But "of the people there was none with him." His disciples forsook Him and fled. The Jews bitterly persecuted Him and demanded that He be crucified. The soldiers in mockery arrayed Him in robes, and placed on His head a crown of thorns. The Roman governor unjustly signed the decree that put Him to death. The high priests passed by the cross, tauntingly wagging their heads, and scornfully saying, "He saved others; let Him now save Himself." While enduring the

agony upon the cross His lips became parched with burning fever, and He cried out, "I thirst." But there was no one there to heed His dying cry or offer Him a cup of cooling water. He who had replenished the earth with flowing rivers; He who had caused the sparkling waters to gush forth from thousands of bubbling fountains, had to die athirst. This cry of Jesus while the blood was trickling from His head, His hands, and His feet; while the death sweat was gathering in great drops on His forehead; while the burden of man's guilt was crushing His heart,—this dying cry fell upon no friendly ear, and awakened no sympathy in His behalf. No loving hand was ready to give Him even a cup of water, "of the people there was none with Him." Humanity had naught but ingratitude to bestow upon the dying Savior; the sinful world was devoid of any sympathy.

III. YET HIS TRIUMPH WAS COMPLETE.

The Hero of the prophet, though red in His apparel, though treading the winepress alone, marches forth from the field of battle with the step of a conqueror and with His banner unfurled. He comes forth from the severe conflict having taken vengeance on His enemies and obtained redemption for His people. At first there was apparent defeat. The disciples were overwhelmed with grief and disappointment when Jesus was put to death. The Jews were delighted with the work they had accomplished, and were careful to roll a great stone to

the door of the sepulcher, sealing it with the governor's seal to make sure of the final outcome. The spirits of evil, no doubt, held high carnival over the victory they thought they had won over the Son of God. The veil of the temple was rent in twain; the quaking earth gave vent to its throbbings of grief; the sun put a veil of mourning over his face, and the moon and the stars refused to shine when Jesus died. There was no doubt silence in heaven when He bowed His head and gave up the ghost; the notes of angel choristers died away, and the harps of the heavenly harpers were unstrung. But defeat at the death of Christ was only apparent. On the third morning hope revived, for the clouds were rifted. Bozrah's strong walls had fallen; Edom's marshaled hosts had been overcome. Death had been disrobed of its terrors, and the forces of evil had been vanquished. Jesus arose from the grave; He arose in triumph. Having, by His presence among the dead, perfumed the sleeping-place of all His saints; having by His power wrenched from the fell-monster the keys of the tomb; having, with strongest cords, bound fast to His chariot wheels Death, Hell, and the Grave, He arose in triumph. The soldiers who guarded the sepulcher fell to the earth as dead men; the Jews who were His enemies were overwhelmed with dismay; the evil spirits, stricken with panic, fled back to their native gloom; the sun again shone forth in beauty; the choristers of heaven struck anew their harps, and the notes of a new song echoed through heaven and earth. The

hearts of the disciples were filled with joy when Jesus arose, and the Church started out anew on its glorious mission; for the Captain of their salvation had conquered His enemies, and the year of His redeemed had come.

Behold the conquering Hero, not in the dim visions of prophecy, but in glorious reality, as He marches forward! His apparel may be red, and his garments like him that treadeth in the winefat, but His step is of One who is triumphant, of One who is "mighty to save." He marches forward no more to suffer, no more to die. The people throng His pathway; multitudes enlist under His banner; nations bow to His sway and trust in His saving power. Already He has extended His scepter to every continent, to every island, to every clime; already is the chorus of His praise heard in every land; and the good time is no doubt coming when every heart shall taste His love, and every voice proclaim Him King.

"O that with yonder sacred throng
We at His feet may fall!
We'll join the everlasting song,
And crown Him Lord of all."

XIV.

INHERITANCE OF GOD'S CHILDREN.

"If children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ."—ROM. VIII, 17.

AN inheritance is promised to the children of God. It is a rich and glorious inheritance. It is an inheritance that is worthy of constant thought and constant meditation. The hope of its possession should inspire the heart with unceasing joy. We prize very highly an earthly inheritance. Whether it be one of great value or ever so humble, we look forward with pleasure to its real attainment. If it consists in broad acres of land, we examine with care the title deed, we survey its metes and bounds, and we anticipate the rich harvests that it will produce for us. If it consists in silver and gold, or in stocks and bonds, we impatiently await the day when it shall be placed in our control, and the revenue derived from it may be used for our good. It becomes the chief theme of our thoughts and conversation and we spare no effort in obtaining its possession. Much more should our thoughts dwell upon that heavenly portion promised in the text; much greater should be our efforts to gain that in-

heritance that is "incorruptible and passeth not away."

In this part of his Epistle the apostle presents the progress of a soul from sin unto God. He has already spoken of the fearful ruin wrought upon man by the fall. He has referred to the deep depravity of man's nature and the fearful danger to which he is exposed on account of his guilt. He has described the wretchedness of a man awakened to his lost condition and made conscious of his condemnation. He now traces the steps man takes in the work of salvation. He speaks of the great joy and peace experienced when he believes in Christ and his sins are forgiven; he refers to the new life begun when the heart is regenerated and the assurance is given him of his adoption into the family of God; he dwells upon the power of Divine grace to cleanse the soul from all unrighteousness and to fully sustain it amid life's trials and temptations; he points to the victory over death which the follower of Christ shall obtain; but as the climax of all their blessed experience he brings prominently to view in the text the rich and glorious inheritance promised to them: "If children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ."

The theme presented for our meditation is one of deepest interest and full of blessed inspiration.

I. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF GOD'S CHILDREN.

What are they? By what distinguishing marks may His children be known? Who are the heirs to this glorious inheritance?

The language of the inspired apostle makes this question one of vital importance. "If children" implies that there are those who are the children of God, and there are those who are not; that, therefore, not all men are heirs. The Scriptures speak of mankind as divided into two classes. Some are called the servants of righteousness, and others the servants of sin; some are mentioned as the children of God, and others as the children of the wicked one. Those who are the children of God are heirs; those who are not the children of God have no claim to the promise. The great and important inquiry of every heart should therefore be, "Am I a child of God? Have I a part in that rich inheritance?"

To determine who are the heirs to an earthly possession we examine the last will of the testator. In that will the name of the heir must be found or his character so described that he may be easily identified. Our elder Brother, Jesus Christ, has left to us His will. In that will we are to find the distinguishing marks of those for whom the inheritance is provided. None can lawfully lay claim to any part of the promised possessions but those who bear the characteristics which He prescribes. The Holy Scriptures contain the will of Christ, and in them we are to find the answer to the question, "Who are the children of God? Who are the heirs to that inheritance?"

I. The first distinguishing mark of the children of God is their likeness to Him. The names of the heirs are not mentioned in the will of Christ, but

this characteristic is distinctly set forth. The use of the term "children" suggests this likeness. Children are always expected to resemble their parents. The features of the countenance, the color of the eyes or hair, the tone of the voice, the peculiar make of the form, the mental and moral faculties,—in some or all of these things the child is the image of the parent. You always note the likeness of the child to its father or mother. Ask that stalwart father whose son that boy is walking by his side. A little surprised, he will answer: "Why, he is my son. His limbs are getting large and stout like my limbs. He has red hair, you see, just like my hair. He is my son; he looks like me." Ask that young mother whose child that baby is that she tenderly presses to her bosom. She will answer: "It is my child. Look at her blue eyes; see the dimple in her cheek. She is my child; she just looks like me." The question discussed around almost every cradle is, "Which does the babe resemble most, its father or its mother?" A resemblance to the parent is always suggested when the term "children" is used. If, then, we are the children of God, we are like God. But man can not be like God in his physical features, for God is a Spirit, without body and material form. This likeness must be found in the moral or spiritual nature of man. But naturally man is spiritually or morally unlike God. He is guilty of sin. His nature is unholy. His heart is unclean and filled with enmity to that which is good and true. In

order that he may bear the likeness of God his moral nature must be changed. How shall he be changed? He can not make of himself a new creature. In all the discoveries of science and philosophy he finds no power that can purify his moral being. The culture of the mind and the development of his intellectual faculties will not make his spiritual nature holy. How can the change be wrought? Only by going to Him who could cleanse the leper, who could give sight to the blind, and who could raise the dead, can man find One who is able to make of him a new creature. When man gives up all sin and trusts alone in Him who died for him; when his faith rests upon the Suffering One in Gethsemane; when he casts himself at the foot of the cross on Calvary; when he accepts of Jesus as his loving Savior,—it is then the Spirit will apply the blood of cleansing to his heart and stamp upon it the image of righteousness and true holiness. By faith in Christ his moral nature is changed; he receives the Divine likeness and becomes a child of God.

2. God's children are recognized by Him. He gives to them a conscious evidence of their adoption into His family.

That father who fails to recognize his own son possesses but little paternal affection. The better instincts of his nature ever prompt him to bestow a fatherly embrace upon his child. That mother would be considered a hard-hearted woman who would deny her own babe and cast it from her arms.

Earthly parents joyfully greet their children, and always are ready to give them their loving caresses. They care for them when in need, they comfort them when in sorrow. Our Heavenly Father is not less mindful of His children. To all who become members of His family He gives a clear and joyful recognition.

But man by nature is not a member of God's household. He is a stranger to God, an alien to the commonwealth of Israel. It is only by the act of Divine mercy that these relations are changed. When man obtains forgiveness for sin and becomes a new creature, through grace he is adopted into the family of God. It is to this change of his relations to God that the apostle refers when he says, "Ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but ye have received the Spirit of adoption whereby we cry Abba, Father." And again he says, "Born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." Man, who naturally is an alien, a stranger, an orphan, is graciously adopted into the Divine family and made an heir of God. This change is conscious, is experimental. He who becomes a child of God receives evidence, not only of the forgiveness of his sins, but also of his adoption into the family of God. This evidence may be given by the new desires and new affections springing up in the heart. The fruits of the Spirit found therein attest the presence and work of the Spirit of adoption. "We know," says the apostle, "that we have passed from death unto

life because we love the brethren." In the new spiritual life is found this new grace. The Holy Spirit, having cast out enmity, has filled the heart with love. He also has imparted to the soul peace and joy and longsuffering. These graces now abound therein, because the Spirit of adoption has been given.

But this change of relations is not only inferred from the fact that the fruits of the Spirit are found ripening in the soul. There is a direct and impressive assurance. The inspired apostle declares that "His Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirits that we are the children of God." We may not be able to understand or explain how the Holy Spirit brings to our hearts this blessed message, but of the fact we may be fully conscious. Mr. Wesley, in speaking of this gracious experience, says: "I do not mean that the Spirit of God testifies this by any outward voice; no, nor always by an inward voice, though He may. Neither do I suppose that He always applies to the heart, though He may, one or more texts of Scripture. But He works upon the soul by His immediate influence and by a strong though inexplicable operation, that the stormy winds and troubled waves subside, and there is a sweet calm, the heart resting in the arms of Jesus, and the sinner being clearly satisfied that all his iniquities are forgiven and all his sins covered." We may not hear a voice saying to us, "Son, thy sins are forgiven thee; arise and go in peace;" but the sense of guilt is removed, the clouds of condemna-

tion are rolled away, the morning sunlight shines upon the soul, a conscious peace pervades the heart, and deepest sadness and penitential tears and sighs of sorrow give place to a spirit of rejoicing. Our Heavenly Father grants to His children a clear, a full, a satisfactory recognition.

3. The children of God obey their Father's commands.

The beauty of any household is love and watch-care on the part of the parents, and reverence and obedience on the part of the children. That family circle around which strife and discord abound, where the children manifest no regard for parental advice, and give no heed to parental commands, is one where but little happiness is found. The very relation of child to parent leads us to expect filial respect. The world condemns the willful and disobedient son or the daughter that gives no heed to parental wishes and admonitions. The happy home, the delightful family circle, is one where there are not only parental care and love and smiles, but where the sons and daughters reverence their parents; where the advice of father and mother is gladly received, and their commands are lovingly obeyed. Such is especially true of the children of God. They earnestly seek to know His will, and with cheerful and glad hearts hasten to obey His precepts. Has God said, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, soul, mind, and strength?" His children will not be found loving other things more than they love Him. Has God

said, "Remember the Sabbath-day to keep it holy?" His children will not be known as seeking their own pleasure and doing their own work on that day. Has God said, "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain?" His children will not be guilty of irreverently using His name. Has God said, "Pray without ceasing; ask and you shall receive?" His children will take delight in coming to the mercy-seat, in being found frequently at the altars of private and public prayer. Has God said unto each one of His children, "Let your light shine before men?" His children will not be found standing idle in the market-place or living reckless of the influence they are exerting upon their fellow men. To know His will will be their most earnest desire, and, not with a spirit of fear but with a soul full of love, they will faithfully and earnestly obey His Word.

4. The children of God trust Him always. They have abiding faith in their Heavenly Father. A child implicitly confides in its father and mother, but will flee from a stranger. Whether that parent be wealthy or poor, whether learned or unlearned, its confidence is cheerful and unwavering. If trouble comes or storms arise, children hasten to their parents as if sure of protection from all harm. If want oppresses or hunger pinches, it is to its parent that the child goes, expecting needful supplies. If it suffers with pain or is scorched with fevers, it will lean its head upon its mother's bosom, and there find relief from all its troubles. Many years ago, in

childhood's early days, on a cold, stormy winter night, I was carried in my father's arms homeward from a neighbor's house. Although the snow was falling fast, and the winds blowing, and the ice cracking beneath my father's steps, I had no fear. The more severe the cold winds blew, the more closely I nestled to my father's warm bosom. I knew in whose strong arms I was being borne, and fully trusted my father to bring me home in safety. It is said that in the late Civil War of our country a poor man was drafted into the Confederate army. He was called to leave his wife and quite a brood of children with scant supplies for a livelihood. In his absence they had to obtain food and clothing by their own efforts. That mother, as best she could, prayerfully cared for her children. Sometimes want seemed ready to cross their threshold. Often the barrel of meal would become nearly empty, and then it would be filled up again. They thus struggled on between hope and fear. One day her little four-year-old boy came to her with a pleasant smile upon his face, and said, "Ma, I believe God hears when we scrape the bottom of the barrel." So God's children trust in Him. They know that He watches over them and lovingly cares for them. Their confidence fails not. They trust Him in sickness or health, in poverty or in wealth, at home and abroad, when the sun shines or the clouds lower, living or dying. Sometimes the storms may be severe; sometimes the way may be through deep and troubled waters; sometimes disappointments

may come and adversity may frown, but the children of God ever find refuge from the blasts of the world under the shadow of the Almighty.

These characteristics distinguish the children of God. They are morally like Him; they are recognized by Him; they obey His commands; they trust in Him. They who possess these characteristics are His children, and "if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ."

II. THE INHERITANCE PROMISED IS GLORIOUS.

In the title deed to an earthly inheritance the boundary lines are clearly marked out and the number of acres is given. The heir can without difficulty determine its worth. An inheritance is provided for every child of God; its title is clear and definite; but who has been able to measure its dimensions or tell of all its glories? Human language is unable fully to describe it. Men have attempted in words of prose to give a full description of it, but have failed. The most brilliant imagination of the poet has been unable to give in song expression to all its grandeur. Painters on canvas with brush and pencil and the richest colors have not succeeded in displaying its untold beauties. Even the pen of inspiration does not attempt to number all its glories. And the mightiest angelic intellect can not comprehend its wonderful outlines. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him." It is an inheritance boundless and glorious.

Sometimes as I have thought of that promised possession; as I have tried to measure its lengths and breadths, and with faith's plummet attempted to fathom its depths, I have said, if the Christian's inheritance be only the joy of sins forgiven, the lifting of the burden of guilt from the heart, and the cleansing of the soul from all impurity; if this joy, which no tongue can express, be the inheritance of God's children, that were enough. But it is more than that. Then I have said, if it consists in the sweet peace that flows from a life of faith in the Son of God and the inspiring hope of a happy immortality, that were enough. But it is more than that. Then I have said, if the portion of God's children were only grace to sustain in life's trials and to give complete triumph in the hour of death, that were enough. But it is more than that. Then I have said, if it be an abundant entrance into the kingdom above, greeting with joy those who have gone on before, and a home forever in the mansions of the blessed, that were enough. But it is more than that. It is more than a home in heaven, more than an immortal crown, more than robes of white and palms of victory, more than to play upon the harps of the redeemed and to sing the song of Moses and the Lamb. It is more than all these. "If children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ." It is to be the heir of God. God is their inheritance. Does God hold in His possession the wealth of the universe? If I am His child, that shall be mine. Does God reign as King over all

above and beneath? If I am His child, I am an heir to the kingdom. Is God almighty? I am an heir to the protection Omnipotence can give. Is God all love? If I am His child, I am an heir to His boundless and eternal love. O the glorious inheritance of the children of God; richer than golden paved cities, brighter than blazing suns, more enduring than eternity itself! "If children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ."

This glorious inheritance may not only be ours in the life above; but even here, in the life that now is, we may have God as our portion and enjoy a foretaste of the bliss to come. We may rest securely under the shadow of His approving smiles; we may have His peace as a river flowing through our souls; we may have His power manifested in our defense in every conflict; and we may live with "His love richly shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost given unto us."

How strong the incentives for every one to repent of sin, to turn away from transgressions, to trust in Jesus, and to love and serve God! How important that we confess Christ before saints on earth and saints in heaven, before angels and men, that we may become the children of God and be heirs to this glorious inheritance! May the loving Spirit of the blessed Savior lead us all into God's happy family!

XLV.

JEHOVAH-JIREH.

“And Abraham called the name of that place Jehovah-jireh.”—GEN. XXII, 14.

ABRAHAM was a man of strong faith in God. This was the chief characteristic of his whole life. With him it was greater than love of ease, or love of country, or love of kin. It was faith in God that caused him to leave his native land, to bid farewell to all his father's family, and, after making a long journey, to pitch his tent among strangers in a strange land. He always accepted the commands of God without a question; he constantly submitted to be led by the hand of God, and cheerfully bowed his will to the will of God. So unwavering was his faith in God, so ready his obedience to the commands of God, that he received the exalted title “The Friend of God.” Faith and obedience so fully characterized his whole life that he became an illustrious example of piety for all generations, for all ages. On account of his faith, God often revealed Himself to Abraham, directed his steps in the way of safety, gave promise to him of great temporal and spiritual mercies, and wrought in his behalf many wonderful deliverances. His dealings

with Abraham give proof of that constant regard that God ever has for those who love and serve Him.

In the historical incident of which the text forms a part is presented a deeply interesting manifestation of God to this illustrious patriarch. God called unto him, and gave him a startling command. The trial through which he was made to go was most severe, yet earnest and steadfast were his faith and obedience. The Divine order was to take Isaac his son, the son of his old age, the son in whom all his hopes for the future were centered, to take him and offer him as a sacrifice on one of the mountains in the land of Moriah. The command fell upon his ear like a thunderbolt from a cloudless sky. The thought of obeying must have rent his heart with pangs of untold grief. Startling as was the command, yet the simple record is that he rose up early in the morning and went forward to perform the task. He took with him Isaac, his son; he cleft the wood for the burnt-offering, and "went unto the place of which God had told him." On the third day they drew near the appointed spot. As they ascended the mountain together, Isaac said to his father, "Behold the fire and the wood; but where is the lamb for a burnt-offering?" The father, no doubt with quivering lip and choking breath, replied, "My son, God will provide Himself a lamb for a burnt-offering." They came to the place that God had selected. An altar was erected. The wood was laid in order upon the altar. Then he "bound Isaac, his son, and laid him on the altar upon the

wood. And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son." When God had seen the ready obedience of his servant and fully proven his faith; when in Abraham's uplifted hand was the sharp knife about to pierce the heart of his son; when all the terrible agony of soul in making the sacrifice had been realized by the aged patriarch, God again spoke to him, and said, "Lay not thy hand upon the lad; for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, from Me." Abraham's knife was withdrawn, and dropped from his hand. He looked and saw behind him "a ram caught in the thicket by his horns. He took the ram and offered him up for a burnt-offering in the stead of his son. And Abraham called the name of that place Jehovah-jireh."

The name given to the place literally means "the Lord will provide." It was given as a memorial of God's provision of a burnt-offering instead of Isaac. It was a grateful monument to the Divine interposition in the hour of greatest extremity. Trusting in God and strictly obedient to His command, Abraham was rewarded by help afforded in the time of need. The name was also a prophecy of future events. On Mount Moriah a greater sacrifice was to be offered. That place was to witness the sufferings of the Son of God in providing salvation for the world. There was to be made the great sin-offering for man. To the prophetic eye of the patriarch was here revealed a typical view of the tragic scenes of Calvary. No doubt he

looked with wonder and delight upon the unfolding pages of Divine mercy to man; and, inspired by the spirit of prophecy, he gives name to the place. With Abraham we also, by faith, may view the same scene. Looking upon the Lamb of God suffering and dying upon the cross in man's stead, and beholding the glory that should follow, we, too, may joyfully call the name of the place Jehovah-jireh; we, too, may realize that here the Lord provides redemption for the world. The trial and reward of faith is the interesting theme brought to view in the text.

I. THE EXERCISE OF FAITH AND ITS STEADFASTNESS ARE ILLUSTRATED IN THE CONDUCT OF ABRAHAM.

His faith remained throughout the trial unmoved as a mountain of granite, and his obedience shone forth as the noonday sun. No duty could have been imposed upon him that was harder to perform; no command could have been given him that would more certainly have shaken his confidence. Objections to its performance, apparently well-founded, were no doubt suggested to his mind. His fatherly affection and human reason would have united in inducing him to shrink from the duty. To obey, he might have argued, would surely defeat even the promise of God. "In Isaac shall thy seed be called," was the Divine assurance. The preservation of the life of Isaac was necessary in order that this promise might be verified. How

dare he, by thrusting the deadly knife to the heart of his son and offering him as a sacrifice, attempt to defeat God's own word? Also the moral law imposed upon all mankind solemnly said, "Thou shalt not kill." The penalty of that law would certainly be incurred if he obeyed the command. Again, the warm paternal love for his son—his only son, the son of his old age—with irresistible pleadings, would powerfully withhold his hand from such a bloody deed. And yet, with all these objections and all these earnest persuasions rising up before him against such work, he gave implicit heed to the voice of God. With no single ray of light upon the dark cloud over his head, with no promised relief in performing the severe task, the Divine command fell upon his ear, "Take thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt-offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of." To all the pleadings of a father's heart, to all the objections that human reason could suggest, to all the direful consequences that might follow, Abraham turned a deaf ear. He rose up early in the morning, and went forward with haste to fully obey the word of the Lord. How could his faith have been more severely tried? How could a duty have been imposed upon him more heart-rending? How strong was his faith in God to remain unmoved by such a test! And yet how earnestly and readily the work is performed! Abraham's faith

was without example, and his obedience was complete.

1. Such faith is necessary for the soul seeking salvation. On its exercise depends the obtaining of forgiving mercy. The penitent seeking pardon for sin must fully submit his will to the will of God. He must be willing to surrender the dearest idol of his heart. The sin that most easily besets him, the earthly object most dearly cherished that stands in the way of his salvation, must be relinquished. The fondest and most alluring associations of life, if opposed to the right, must be severed. Any and every sacrifice demanded must be made. The love of the world, the lust of the eye, the unholy ambitions of the soul, must be given up. To obtain God's pardoning mercy dependence upon self, or friends, or wealth, or social position, must give way to dependence upon Christ. All other paths must be forsaken for the path that leads to the cross. All other trust must be discarded for that which centers alone in the merits of the atoning Lamb of God. Rising up early, without delay, with unwavering faith, he must accept of Jesus as his personal Savior. With tears of penitence falling from his eyes, without reserve of heart, he should be ready to say:

"All my trust on Thee is stayed,
All my help from Thee I bring;
Cover my defenseless head
With the shadow of Thy wing."

2. Such faith should characterize every child of God. The path of the just "is as the shining light,"

yet there may be rough hills to climb and deep valleys to pass through. There may be heavy crosses to be borne. There may be duties that are difficult to perform. There may be sacrifices required from which the soul would shrink back. There may be trials to endure which seem ready to crush the heart. But the work to which God calls us, the crosses which He lays upon our shoulders, the sacrifices which He requires, are to be met by us without complaining, without fear. We should not stop to parley with seemingly well-founded objections. All that God commands should be done without delay, the whole heart bowing before His will, the whole soul rising up early to fully perform what He requires. Such faith is required in order to retain the Divine favor. Such faith is the only condition of personal advancement in the Divine life. Such faith is necessary in order to overcome temptation, to endure trials, and to gain an abundant entrance into the kingdom of God. While God may not bid us literally to offer as a sacrifice an Isaac, the son we love, as He required of Abraham, yet we must be as ready as was the old patriarch to fully obey His every command.

II. THE REWARD OF FAITH IS GLORIOUS.

The ordeal through which Abraham was called to pass was most trying. The crucible into which he was cast was glowing hot. No duty could have been more difficult, no sacrifice could have been harder to make. And yet the reward which Abra-

ham received for his faith and obedience far exceeded in magnitude the severity of the test he underwent. The joy that his heart realized in the wonderful truths revealed on Mount Moriah dispelled every cloud that had hung upon the mountain's brow. The unfoldings of Divine mercy that there fell upon his vision more than compensated him for every pang of grief that had pierced his heart, for every burning tear that had fallen from his eyes. His ear was there permitted to hear the grand chorus of glad tidings from heaven itself, and his soul was enabled to bask with delight in the Divine revelation of "peace and good will to men."

1. God made known to him on Mount Moriah the plan provided for the world's salvation. This revelation was typically given in the offering of Isaac. From the time of man's fall and banishment from the garden of Eden; from the day when the prophecy was uttered that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head; from the first intimation from heaven of the possibility of guilty man being able to escape the death of sin, it had been an unsolved question how his salvation could be effected. It was a theme of interest upon which the patriarchs pondered. It was a problem which the angels studied, but could not solve. How could God be just and yet forgive the guilt of man? was a question shrouded in mystery. In the offering of Isaac as a sacrifice God gave to Abraham an answer to this question that so interested his mind.

He was afforded typically a distinct, though far distant, view of the unfolding of the plan of human salvation. His faith that led him obediently to virtually offer Isaac as a burnt-offering was enabled there to apprehend the rich provisions God had made for the world's redemption.

An atoning sacrifice was needed. The law had been violated by man, and the penalty of that law was death. Man, guilty and condemned, must suffer that penalty or some acceptable victim must die in his stead. Only by the shedding of blood was salvation possible. As God provided an offering as a substitute for Isaac, so one would be provided to die in man's stead. In the sacrifice that Abraham offered on Mount Moriah he saw plainly a type of the greater sacrifice that was to be made there in the fullness of time, the "Lamb slain from the foundation of the world," the great atonement for the sins of mankind. His faith grasped the merits of that greater sacrifice, and his heart was made glad; and in view of that wonderful provision for the propitiation of man's sins, "he called the name of that place Jehovah-jireh." We, too, may climb Moriah's heights with hearts weary and heavy-laden; we, too, may look by faith upon the Lamb of God as He dies for us; and as He cries out upon the cross, "It is finished," the demands of the broken law have been fully met; we, too, may have our hearts filled with joy, for, "being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

The sacrifice was a voluntary offering. It is

said that Abraham "bound Isaac, and laid him upon the altar upon the wood." Scarcely could a man of his advanced age and feebleness have been able to bind Isaac against his will, now when he was endowed with all the strength of his young manhood. The pious son no doubt submitted willingly to the hands of his father and the will of God. The sacrifice made for man was a voluntary offering. Jesus the Christ, being above the law, placed Himself under the law, took upon Himself the form of a servant, became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, that He might redeem those that were under the law. He "loved us and gave Himself for us." He voluntarily "tasted death for every man." To save a fallen race, to lift man up from darkness and despair, He cheerfully endured the agonies of Gethsemane, and gave His life for the people on Calvary.

Again, this sacrifice was of priceless value. The cost of man's salvation was only measured by the boundlessness of Divine love. Abraham was commanded to offer his own son. He withheld not his only son, the son of his old age, whom he loved. How tender, how warm, how great was that love! Words could not tell the fervor of that father's affection. Severe was the struggle in his bosom as the chords of love were rent in making the offering. But our Heavenly Father's love was greater than that of the old patriarch. As far as the Divine exceeds the human, so far did God's love for his Son exceed Abraham's love for Isaac. Yet "God

so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." That love was boundless. No measuring line could fathom its depths or tell its heights. It was deeper than hell and higher than heaven. It was as limitless as space and vast as eternity. The well-beloved Son was given to humiliation, to pain, to intense suffering, to cruel death, that through His merits we might have hope and life.

"O, for this love let rocks and hills
Their lasting silence break,
And all harmonious human tongues
The Savior's praises speak!"

2. God gave Abraham assurance of help in every extremity. His faith and obedience were fully tested. His willingness of heart and the readiness of his hands to offer Isaac as God had commanded were fully proven. But when the sharp knife was drawn, when the deadly stroke was about to fall, God called unto him. In his greatest extremity help was afforded. A ram was provided for a burnt-offering instead of Isaac. In that moment of greatest want, God was present to provide relief. So in the gift of His Son as our Savior, when no other help could be found, God gives to all His children assurance of Divine aid in time of need. You may not be called upon to offer up as a sacrifice an only son. Such a severe ordeal may not lay along your path. Yet seasons of great need will

come to you. Disappointments may be experienced; physical pain may be severe; sore bereavements may rend your heart with grief; fearful temptations may cross your path; earthly hopes may fade, and even death may draw nigh; but at all times God in Christ is present to provide help. In life, in separations, in death, He is present to give comfort. In the greatest extremities the grace of God will be sufficient for us. From the cross there comes to every trusting heart the voice of love and precious assurance. It speaks to every one in hours of trouble or grief, tenderly saying:

“Come, ye disconsolate, where'er ye languish;
Come to the mercy-seat, fervently kneel;
Here bring your wounded hearts, here tell your anguish;
Earth hath no sorrow that Heaven can not heal.”

3. The faith of Abraham was rewarded with an assurance of the resurrection of the dead. This hope may have been his only solace while journeying to the land of Moriah. The promise of God had been given that “in Isaac shall thy seed be called.” He knew that promise must be verified. He argued that, in order that it might be fulfilled, if his son was offered as a sacrifice, he must be again restored to life. The apostle notes this fact when he says Abraham “by faith offered up Isaac, accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead, from whence also he received him in a figure.” Now his belief in the doctrine was fully established by his prophetic view of the future.

On the mountains of Moriah the Son of God not only died upon the cross as man's sin-offering, but also arose in triumph from the tomb. He went down into the grave, and by His presence there sanctified the sleeping-place of all His saints. He met in conflict man's last enemy; He conquered Death, He broke down the bars of the tomb; He arose in triumph over all His enemies, and "became the firstfruits of them that slept." Now man no longer needs to fear the fell monster. Now Death no longer wields a victorious scepter. He may touch every human form with his chilly fingers; he may cause weeping and sorrow in every household; he may dig his graves, and weave his winding-sheets, and build his coffins, but since Jesus arose his scepter has been broken. In Christ a glorious resurrection is provided, and Death's kingdom totters to the fall. By and by a brighter day will come. By and by the resurrection morn will dawn. Then the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and come forth to life again. Then loved ones shall meet again, no more to be separated. Then broken ties of love will be welded again, no more to be severed. Then shall God's saints in one glad chorus unitedly sing: "O Death, where is thy sting? O Grave, where is thy victory? Thanks be unto God who giveth us the victory through Jesus Christ our Lord." O, the glorious hope of the child of God! O, the rich reward that God has provided for all who love and obey Him!

No wonder that Abraham called the name of

that place Jehovah-jireh. No wonder that his bosom grew calm as the storm-cloud that had hung over him for three days was withdrawn. No wonder, as the light of the latter day broke in upon his vision and the sun of righteousness arose before him over the mountains of Moriah, that he exultingly exclaimed, "The Lord will provide!" By faith we also may approach that sacred spot and find comfort. As we, by faith, witness the flowing blood and hear the dying groans of the Son of God, we may well weep that our sins and our guilt caused such pangs of grief. But when he conquers Death and comes forth in triumph from the grave, then may we rejoice that through Him we may be saved. And as we realize His precious saving grace and experience His redeeming power, we, too, may build a memorial of God's love and mercy, and inscribe upon it the prophetic name, "The Lord will provide."

Let the life and example of Abraham lead us to stronger faith in God. Let his strict obedience to the Divine commands direct our steps in the path of greater steadfastness. Let the light and joy and hope that cheered his heart ever be our blessed inheritance. Let the sacred spot where the greater sacrifice was offered for the world be to undying faith our Jehovah-jireh.

XVI.

HE FIRST LOVED US.

"We love Him, because He first loved us."—I JOHN
IV, 19.

THE mind of man, with all its wonderful powers can not comprehend Deity. The finite is unable to measure the Infinite or fathom the Eternal. Yet God has revealed His nature and attributes to man so far as is necessary for his instruction and salvation. The glory of the Divine Being must ever be the subject of man's study, the object of man's wonder, the inspiration of man's service. God has clearly made known His will concerning man, and in the revelation of His sublime perfection and attributes He has afforded sufficient reason to cause man to acknowledge the Divine authority and to perform the Divine will. Our impurity blushes with shame before His holiness; our fears are aroused by His justice and power; our sincerity is quickened by His all-seeing eye; our faith is encouraged by His immutability; our obedience is made reasonable by His sovereignty; but our heart's gratitude and love are kindled by the glorious exhibitions of His goodness and mercy. The whole character of God, as revealed in His Word, His

works, and His providences, is a reasonable, exciting, and ever-present incentive to man to forsake sin and seek happiness by glorifying His name. God does not reveal Himself to us simply to gratify our curiosity, but that we may know Him aright and have eternal life.

The apostle refers in the text to God's attribute of love, and speaks of it as a reasonable motive for serving Him. "We love Him, because He first loved us." He here gives expression to a sentiment that is the experience of every Christian's heart; a sentiment accepted as true by every worshiper of God. "We love Him;" our desires go out after Him; our affections rise and center in Him; our thoughts willingly dwell upon Him; our very being bows before Him, admires and adores Him; "we love Him, because He first loved us." His other attributes may excite our wonder and arouse our fears, but His love is the great magnet that attracts our love. If you ask the happy ones who have sought God in the salvation of their souls, why they have put their trust in Him, they will answer, "We love Him, because He first loved us." If you inquire of those who have, on account of their faith, been called to endure persecutions bitter and relentless, who have remained steadfast when locked in dungeon cell, who have willingly yielded their bodies to the devouring flames at the stake, why they thus cling to His teachings and His service, they will answer, "We love Him, because He first loved us." And if you seek from the good and

wise of all ages and all climes the controlling incentive that led them from the paths of sin to the way of Gospel holiness and Bible piety, they, too, will reply, "We love Him, because He first loved us." It is His wisdom that awakens our admiration; it is His power that excites our fears; it is His purity that startles our guilty consciences; but His love, manifested in the gift of His Son our Savior, charms our thoughts and melts our hearts; and through the sanctifying influence of His grace we are enabled to rise up from the guilt, the enmities and degradations of sin to gladly admire, to earnestly worship, and to sincerely love God.

While we meditate upon these words of the apostle, that love of God to fallen man, to us, to all, should kindle in our hearts a flame of reciprocal love, a love true and abiding.

I. THE LOVE OF GOD TO MAN MERITS A RETURN OF LOVE TO HIM.

The evident meaning of the text is, that we ought to love Him because of His love to us. The major premise of the argument is, that love bestowed rightly demands always a return of love; that as God has been man's great benefactor, as His goodness and mercy have been abundant towards man, then man should render to God, as a grateful service, a return of perfect love.

Many live, however, in practice denying the truth of this principle. They love the world and the things of the world more than they love God.

They love self and the things of self far more than they love the service of God. They listen with more delight to the siren voice of sinful pleasure than they do to the commands of God. They are more deeply interested in temporal affairs than they are in the cause of God. Their thoughts are more earnestly engaged in the plans of this life and the gain of this world than they are about the precepts and promises of God. And yet, while their lives indicate an unbelief of the principle laid down in the text, in their dealings with their fellow men they admit its truth and demand a return for benefits bestowed. The correctness of the principle is fully attested.

1. It may be inferred from nature. The lower animals are controlled by this law. The ox knoweth his master, and yields obedience to him who cares for him. The sheep follow the voice of the shepherd who tenderly watches over them. The spaniel will fawn upon the hand that feeds him. The birds grow tame and confiding about the cottage where kindness to them is shown. The horse will almost laugh lovingly to him who kindly furnishes him food and drink. Even greater love and gratitude would no doubt be manifested to man by the brute creation were it not for want of greater kindness on the part of man. The lower animals love their benefactors. This principle is attested by filial love. The warm affection of the child for its parent illustrates its correctness. Filial love does not necessarily spring from the abstract relation of the parent

to the child. A knowledge of that relation may enhance it, but filial love will not be found to exist when no parental love or kindness is shown. It springs chiefly from the bestowal of parental favors. The reverence given by the son to his father is the return made for protection, for counsel, for blessings bestowed. The ardent love for the mother is kindled to an ever-glowing flame by the tender care, the warm caresses, the vigilant watchings, the overflowing affection that she has conferred upon the child. In these beautiful displays of the heart's unmeasured love, in this universal exhibition of true affection in nature, we have proof of the truth of the principle laid down in the text, that love should ever be repaid by love.

The same thing is attested by our own heart experiences. Who has not realized the growth of affection towards those from whom kindnesses have come? In the homes where kind deeds and kind words abound, gratitude and love grow luxuriantly. They afford comfort to the sorrowing, and shed light about the pillow of the dying. They relieve aching hearts in the hours of disappointment, and give joy to the sighing sons of sorrow. They hew off the rough corners in social life, and twine the bond of brotherhood among mankind. They are to the heart as plenteous showers to the parched earth, as refreshing dews to the withering flowers, as the warm breath of spring to the barren field. We love those who do us kindnesses; we return warm gratitude for affection bestowed.

2. This principle is proven true by the dictates of public opinion. The world demands of all a reciprocity of love.

The ungrateful son is condemned by all. He who has been nurtured by fond parents, whose body has gained strength, and whose mind has received culture through their unceasing care; he who has been the object continually of parental affection and kindnesses,—he is expected, both in youth and mature life, to honor and love those parents. If that son, when he comes to manhood and has received from those parents a title deed to all their possessions, should drive them from his home without comfort or food, or allow them only to find refuge in the almshouse in their old age, he would be justly condemned by public opinion. No one would bestow upon him the smile of approval. All the better instincts of human nature would rise up and pronounce curses upon him. Society would spurn him from its presence, and brand him as a heartless ingrate.

The world condemns the man of business who reciprocates no favors. He may have been in financial trouble and sought and obtained help from you. Such was his condition that if you had pushed your just claims against him, he would have been driven into bankruptcy. But at his request you gave him more time, you gave him needed help, so that he was enabled to pass the crisis in his business safely and to go forward enlarging his possessions. Now, when you have become involved, he has no con-

cern about you. When you want favors he has none to bestow. When, through legal technicalities, he can embarrass you, he manifests no disposition to refrain. Even in view of your financial ruin he presses his claims, and remembers your kindnesses only to oppress you the more. Who would approve of such conduct? Who would consider such action as in the least honorable? Society would turn with loathing from such a man. Public opinion would justly condemn him as a heartless and a mean man for not returning good for favors received.

The world condemns the man guilty of treason. His person and property have always been protected by his government. His freedom has been assured. His honor has been defended. Yet to gain place and power, to gratify the ungodly ambition of his heart, he raises the arm of rebellion, and would destroy the government that has blessed him. Such an act is worthy the just condemnation that is pronounced upon it by mankind, and deserves the infliction of the severest punishment. On the other hand, the world holds in highest honor the memory of those who have been benefactors of their race and loyal to their government. Their deeds are recounted with delight, their names are held in high esteem, and their characters and their conduct are approved by all. The poet sings their praise in verse, the sculptor builds of marble their monument, and young and old of passing generations spread flowers upon their graves.

3. The Scriptures present this principle as true

and right. The text clearly affirms that we ought "to love God, because He first loved us." In many other passages the same lesson is presented. The prophets repeated before the children of Israel the many deliverances which God had wrought in their behalf, and referred to them as a good reason for faithfulness to His commands. The apostles enforced the claims of the Gospel upon those to whom they preached, and urged its acceptance because Jesus had loved them and given Himself for them. The Savior also refers to His works of mercy and His deeds of beneficence as an incentive for His reception. The whole tendency of revelation is to emphasize the duty of man to love God, because He has loved us. It is a principle indorsed by public opinion, one that meets the approval of every man's conscience, and is truly the great common law of humanity as well as the law of God.

II. GOD FIRST LOVED US.

On this grand truth the apostle finds our duty to love and serve God. Many persons who admit that favors bestowed deserve a return of favors seem to deny the other premise of the apostle's argument, that God first loved them. In their lives and practices how many are found who do not love God! How many there are who disobey His commands! How many there are who, either by word or deed, dishonor the name of Jesus! How many who refuse His offers of salvation, and, with hearts unyielding and with love unkindled, turn away from

Gethsemane and from Calvary! And yet the manifestations of God's love to man are countless in number and convincingly powerful.

1. He first loved us in the circumstances of our creation. Loving design and wise adaptation characterize all His works. He made man upright, created him in His own image, and appointed for him a glorious destiny. Although sin has blighted this earth since man was made, though its poisonous breath has strewn his pathway with decay and death, yet this is still a world of beauty. It everywhere affords evidence that it was formed so as to be conducive to man's happiness. It has been made to bring forth bountiful harvests for his good. Its flowers shed fragrance along his pathway. Its choristers chant melodies to his ear. Its bosom is replete with gold and precious diamonds for his enriching. Its fountains bubble up cool waters to slake his thirst. The whole creation, as it passes before the eye as a grand panorama, seems builded and prepared to administer to man's wants and designed to afford him joy. Every portion of God's works about us is stamped with the signet of Divine love.

2. His love is manifested in His kindly providences. The fact that we still live is proof of His great mercy. Why is it that, while our hearts have been devising evil and our feet have been running in paths of sin, the arrow of death has not smitten us down? Why is it that justice, whose demands our wicked acts have provoked, has not received its

just deserts? We know we have been forgetful of God. We know we have forfeited all His forbearance. We know we have not deserved another day's opportunities or mercies. And yet we live. God's watch-care has been over us. We are still preserved. We have been sustained in life by the compassion of God and the love of Jesus. The intercessions of Christ have been effectual in our behalf. The voice of justice, because of our sins and unfaithfulness, has often cried out, "Cut the tree down; why cumbereth it the ground?" But our Great Intercessor has presented the plea that we might be spared another day, another month, another year; that we might again have the opportunity of yielding to His call and be saved. Jesus has been pleading for us, and through His intercessions we live to-day, that we may once more hear the calls of mercy and turn to God. God has preserved us; gratitude and love for Him should fill our hearts.

3. His love is especially manifested in providing salvation. "Jesus has loved us, and given Himself for us."

Man does not fully appreciate the love of God shown in the gift of His beloved Son. He looks too much upon religion as a commonplace affair. He grows weary of its duties and its precepts. He thinks too often of the story of the cross as the narrative of a tragic event of olden times that has no bearing upon the things of to-day. If he looks at all at the scene of Christ's sufferings, it is as at

something far distant from him. It excites but little interest in his mind. He fails to realize that all his hopes for happiness in time and eternity depend upon the offering made on Calvary; that without the cross there is no salvation for man.

The havoc that sin had made upon man's nature was fearful; the condition in which it had placed him was deplorable. It had driven from the soul the spirit of life and peace. It had corrupted his heart and filled it with enmity. It had overwhelmed man with Divine displeasure. It had exposed man to the pains of eternal death. It had made man a sinful, helpless, hopeless creature; no ray of light fell upon his path, no cheerful future greeted his eye; no tender voice spoke words of encouragement to his desponding heart.

“Plunged in a gulf of dark despair,
We wretched sinners lay,
Without one cheering beam of hope,
Or spark of glimmering day.”

When already under the sentence of condemnation; when over his head was uplifted the sword of justice; when the dark clouds of despair were gathering around him, then, full of compassion and love, Jesus came to his help. He bared His own bosom to the stroke of justice, and made salvation possible for man.

“With pitying eyes the Prince of grace
Beheld our helpless grief;
He saw, and, O amazing love!
He ran to our relief.”

“For scarcely for a righteous man will one die, yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth His love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us.” Before we had thought of Him, His compassion was aroused in our behalf. Before we had cried to Him for help, He gave Himself for us. Before we had ceased to commit sin, He made plentiful provisions for our salvation. “He first loved us.” Love to man caused Him to lay aside the glory He had with the Father before the world began, and take upon Himself the form of a servant. Love to man led Him to endure severe persecutions and cruel buffetings. Love to man compelled Him to wear the crown of thorns, to pass through the agonies of Gethsemane, to utter the bitter wailings on the cross, and to bow His head in death. It was because of His love for man that He conquered death, broke down the bars of the tomb, and, ascending on high, became his Advocate before the throne of God. O, what wondrous love was His!

The philanthropic Howard, in pity for his fellow men, visited prison-houses and jails that he might bring to those in bonds some comfort and some relief! But Jesus' love was greater; it was to save from death His bitter enemies. Washington and his patriotic soldiers endured great trials, made long marches, and underwent untold sacrifices that they might give freedom and prosperity to their countrymen. But the love, the sufferings, the sacrifices of Jesus were more wonderful; they were

given to set free those who had voluntarily become slaves to sin and bondmen to death. His was love unmeasured; His was love unmerited, boundless, and free. Should not our hearts swell with love in return? Should not our whole being gladly and earnestly bow before such a loving Father? If the dumb animals regard man with affection for favors bestowed, should not our gratitude be most fervent towards God, the Giver of all our benefits? If warm and abiding love characterizes the dutiful child for parental kindnesses should not our souls be filled with sincerest gratitude to Him who ever cares for us? If we applaud our fellow men for their philanthropic deeds, how much more should we honor Him who has purchased our redemption! If we bestow benedictions and praise upon heroes by whose valor we have civil liberty and national independence, how much more should we adore Him who by His own death obtained for us freedom from guilt, salvation from death, and eternal bliss! Standing by the cross, beholding the Lamb of God suffering and dying for us, witnessing this exhibition of wonderful and unmerited love, our hearts should be melted into tenderness, our souls should be overwhelmed with gratitude, and with our whole heart, soul, mind, and strength we should "love Him who first loved us."

III. OUR LOVE MANIFESTED.

When the love of Christ is begotten in the heart it will not remain there concealed. It must be

made known or it will die. This love will not grow and bear fruit in a cloister, nor continue to glow when hid in the caverns of earth. It seeks the broad light of day. It flourishes where the winds of heaven blow. He that hath the love of Jesus in his heart will long to tell of the rich treasure which he has found. It is the nature of this love to declare its presence. It will speak forth in the sparkle of the eye, or in the smile upon the countenance, or in the hymns of praise, or in the shouts of joy that tell of the gracious work wrought upon the heart.

1. Our love of Christ may be made known by a public profession of His name. Jesus said, "Who-soever shall confess Me before men, him will I confess before My Father which is in heaven." This confession of Christ is therefore a duty as well as a privilege. It is to accept of His commands, to observe His ordinances, and to be numbered with His disciples. It is, by word and deed, to acknowledge Him as our Lord and Savior from whom we have received so rich an inheritance.

2. Our love of Christ may be declared by extending a knowledge of Gospel truth. The ruin of sin has extended to every human heart. The grace of salvation is as extensive in its provisions as the effects of sin. Many around us live without a knowledge of saving power. To all we should bear the tidings of redeeming mercy. We may lead the blind to the fountain of life-giving waters, and bring the leper to Him who is able to heal. All who have experienced the love of God shed abroad in

their hearts may be instrumental in imparting to others the same blessed consciousness. It is said the caravan traveling across the sandy desert, when their vessels of drinking water have been emptied and there is great danger of the whole company perishing with thirst, that then they spread out over the desert in every direction seeking for the living fountain where water may be found to drink. When any one discovers the fountain of clear and refreshing water he at once, with loud voice, shouts to those in the distance, "Come, there is water here!" Each one who hears the joyful news shouts to those farther away, "Come, there is water here!" The glad tidings is borne from one to another throughout the desert until all in the company hear the welcome word and hastily bend their steps to the spot where the gushing waters have been found. So should it be with those who have found this great salvation. Having tasted of the waters of the life-giving fountain, they should make known to others the way to the place where their spiritual thirst may be assuaged. Standing right by the cross of Christ, where their own souls first found light and peace, they should cry aloud to all who are ready to perish with thirst, "Come, there is water here; come, there is water here!" From one to another should the shout go up until all who traverse the world's desert wastes shall hear the joyful tidings, and come to the fountain and drink of the water of life.

3. The love of Christ may be declared in the songs of praise and the chorus of thanksgiving.

When the leper was cleansed he immediately turned and glorified God. When the lame man was restored to strength he went forth leaping and praising God. When blessings are bestowed upon us we gladly render thanks to those from whom we have received them. When victories are gained over the enemy by our armies the voice of rejoicing is heard all over the land. But the work of saving the immortal soul is grander than the healing of a leper, or restoring sight to the blind, or gaining a victory on earth's battlefield. It is the redemption of man from moral death; it is the creation in man's heart of the hope of eternal life; it is the assurance given to man of triumph over death and of an abundant entrance into the kingdom of God. What notes of praise should fall from our lips when that glorious work is experienced by us! What sublime strains of thanksgiving should then employ our tongues! With tears of joy; with countenances lit up in smiles of rapture; with hearts whose every throb is a thank-offering; with voices full and melodious in praises, we should then proclaim our undying love for Him who "first loved us."

When the cholera, some years ago, prevailed in St. Louis, a young man, a minister of the Gospel, was prostrated by that fearful disease and lay dying. No relative was near his couch of suffering to speak words of comfort. Only strangers were there to administer to him in his fatal sickness. A few kind and Christian friends, with tender but willing hands, wiped the death-sweat from his brow.

But he murmured not. His heart was buoyed up by the love of Christ. The presence of a loving Savior in his sick-chamber made "soft his dying bed." Approaching death caused no fear. As his strength grew weaker, as his heart-beats became feebler, as his hands and feet turned colder, almost with his last words, he joyfully exclaimed :

"I'll praise my Maker while I've breath,
And when my voice is lost in death,
Praise shall employ my nobler powers;
My days of praise shall ne'er be past
While life, and thought, and being last,
Or immortality endures."

His saints, living or dying, praise God. In peace or in conflict, in prosperity or in adversity, in health or in sickness, they adore the blessed Christ. They who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, who have entered heaven through great tribulation, lift up their voices in unceasing thanksgiving to their adorable Redeemer. Let our tongues join in the same grand chorus. Let us gladly confess His name, joyfully tell of His saving grace, and through time and eternity "love Him who first loved us."

XVII.

DAVID AND HIS SLING.

“And he took his staff in his hand, and chose him five smooth stones out of the brook, and put them in a shepherd’s bag which he had, even in a scrip; and his sling was in his hand; and he drew near to the Philistine.”—I SAM. XVII, 40.

THE Philistines were an old, a powerful, and an inveterate enemy of the children of Israel. They continued to occupy the maritime plains in the southwestern portion of Palestine long after the other tribes of Canaan had been destroyed or overcome. They often invaded the land of Israel, capturing their cities and villages, destroying the harvests of their fields, and leaving ruin and desolation in their pathway. Another invasion is now made in great force. The men of Israel under Saul are called to arms for defense. The two armies pitched their tents along the valley of Elah, about fifteen miles northwest of the site of Jerusalem. The Philistines were encamped on the north of the valley, the Israelites lay along the south side. For many days they stood facing each other, with the valley between them, while preparing for the battle. While they were thus arrayed opposite each other

there came out from the ranks of the Philistines Goliath their leader, a giant of great prowess and skill, and boldly bade defiance to the soldiers in Saul's army. He demanded that they should choose one of their number to meet him in personal combat, and thus decide the question of victory or defeat. He promised that if their champion was able to overcome and kill him then all the Philistines would submit to be the servants of Israel; but if he overcame, then the Israelites should be the servants of the Philistines. "Give me a man," said he, "that we may fight together." For forty days he continued to come down into the valley and boldly repeated his challenge. The soldiers of Saul heard his words of defiance and were stricken with fear. No one was found willing to accept his challenge. His giant physical proportions and the huge weapons he wielded sent terror to the heart of every Israelite. He stood before them nine feet in height and massive in form. He was well skilled in the use of the weapons he bore. He had on his head a helmet of brass, and was arrayed in a coat of mail. Greaves of brass were on his legs and a target of brass between his shoulders. The staff of his spear was like a weaver's beam, and one went before him bearing a shield. As he came forward, he haughtily cried out, "I defy the armies of Israel this day." When "Saul and all Israel heard the words of the Philistine, they were dismayed and greatly afraid." A panic of fear spread throughout the whole host of Israel. There was imminent danger of utter de-

feat when they should engage the enemy in battle. While Saul's army lay there thus trembling with fear, and the Philistines were exulting in hope of victory, there came from near Bethlehem a shepherd boy to visit his brothers who were enlisted under Saul's banner. He heard the words of defiance uttered by the Philistine, and his indignation was greatly aroused. He saw that the soldiers of Israel were fearfully dismayed. With a courageous heart he bravely addressed them, and said, "Who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?" His brothers chided him for the bold words he uttered, and rebuked him for having left his flocks and come into the lines of the army. But his patriotic spirit was undaunted. He boldly declared that he was not afraid to accept the challenge of the giant and defend the cause of his people. Saul, the king, heard of his courageous utterances, and sent for the young man. In his conference with the king, David said to Saul, "Let no man's heart fail because of him; thy servant will go and fight with him." Saul looked upon him with misgivings, and said, "Thou art not able; thou art but a youth, and he is a man of war from his youth." David assured the king that he could successfully accept the challenge, and told him how he had met and slain the wild beasts that had attempted to destroy his flocks, and was confident he could overcome this proud enemy of Israel. At last the king, still trembling with fear, accepted of David as Israel's champion, and said to him, "Go, and the Lord be with thee."

In order that he might be the best prepared for the conflict, Saul took his own armor off and put it on David. He put the king's helmet of brass on David's head, and buckled on him his own coat of mail. He put the king's sword in his hand, and, thus arrayed in the king's armor, David "assayed to go forth." Had he been prompted by a spirit of vanity and only desirous of making a gorgeous display, he would have gone forth proud of being permitted to appear in the king's glittering armor. But he turned to Saul and said, "I can not go with these, for I have not proved them." He hastily laid them all aside; "and he took his staff in his hand, and chose him five smooth stones out of the brook, and put them in a shepherd's bag which he had, even in a scrip; and his sling was in his hand; and he drew near to the Philistine."

As the giant came forward to meet him, and saw that David was only armed with a staff in his hand, and was but a "youth, and ruddy and of a fair countenance," he despised him. He was angry that one so young and apparently so unskilled in the use of arms should be selected to fight with him. He cursed David, and said, "Come to me, and I will give thy flesh unto the fowls of the air and to the beasts of the field." David fearlessly replied to his boasting antagonist: "Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield; but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel whom thou hast defied. This day will the Lord deliver thee into mine hand,

and I will smite thee, and take thy head from thee; and I will give the carcasses of the host of the Philistines this day unto the fowls of the air, and to the wild beasts of the earth; that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel." The enraged giant defiantly advanced. All Israel was trembling with fear. The soldiers of Saul were seeking places of safety behind rock and tree and hill. They had no confidence in David's ability to overcome the giant; they were even ready to upbraid him for his forwardness. They looked on, expecting to see his complete discomfiture. They had no hope of his success. They only expected his utter defeat, which they thought would prophesy the overthrow of Saul's army. The Philistine host looked on with extreme delight; they waited for their giant leader to win in the combat, and thus insure them victory. But David had no fear; he faltered not. In full view of both armies he hastily ran towards the giant; and as he ran he took from the bag a stone and put it in the sling. When he had reached the proper distance he halted, and, whirling the sling with his strong right arm, he hurled the stone at the Philistine. It sank into the giant's unprotected forehead and he fell prostrate to the earth. David ran, leaped upon the giant's body, and with his enemy's own sword cut off his head. He then held aloft the bleeding head before the startled hosts of both armies. New courage was imparted to the soldiers of Saul. Hastening from their hiding-places the soldiers of Israel were formed into line,

and with a shout of triumph they charged upon the terrified ranks of the enemy. The whole army of the Philistines fled in a panic, and Israel triumphed gloriously.

There has ever been waged a warfare between truth and error. The forces of good and evil stand facing each other to-day in battle array. The bugle call for the onset may be heard in every land. The giants of evil bid defiance to the armies of the Lord. The Goliaths of Paganism, of infidelity, of intemperance, of superstition, of all the powers of darkness, issue their challenges to the combat. Every follower of Christ, every lover of that which is right, every friend of humanity, should be a David brave and true. Each one, with his sling in his hand and his srip full of stones gathered from the brook of Divine truth, should valiantly go forward to meet and overcome these giants of evil.

This interesting incident in the history of the children of Israel affords important lessons for success in spiritual warfare. It impressively typifies the agencies that are Divinely appointed for the accomplishment of good.

I. GOD MAKES CHOICE OF HUMAN INSTRUMENTALITIES IN OVERCOMING EVIL, AND IN ESTABLISHING HIS KINGDOM IN THE WORLD.

In order to defeat Goliath, the giant, and to give victory to the army of Israel, David, a young man, a shepherd boy, is chosen as the instrumentality. God could have smitten down by miraculous power

the boasting Philistine. He could have caused a thunderbolt from the sky to fall upon him and crush him to the dust. He could have made the earth to open beneath his feet and bury him in its deepest caverns. He could have sent the tiny gnat with poisonous sting to strike him in the eye, and thus put an end to his wicked boastings. But miraculous means were not employed. The work was done through human agency. A youth, fresh from watching his father's flocks and herds, was selected. By his prowess and his courage Israel was enabled to triumph. So in overcoming the strongholds of evil and establishing truth and righteousness among men, God does not call into exercise miraculous powers. He could by His almighty hand strike with dumbness the boasting infidel and paralyze the hand that is stretched forth to do evil. He could by an earthquake shiver to pieces every house devoted to making drunkards or used for riotous gambling. He could make speechless the tongue of the profane, shackle the feet of all that trample upon his precepts, or overflow with floods of ruin the multitudes that run to do evil. By the exercise of miraculous power He could banish sin and error from the world. But this is not God's plan of overcoming the forces of darkness or of saving men. He does not even issue commissions to angels from heaven to proclaim the truth and lead the nations into the light. He makes choice of men, of old men and young men; of women, of old women and maidens; He even commissions boys and girls who

have come to know the truth, to make known the excellency of His salvation, to tell the story of the cross, to lift up the fallen, to break down the strongholds of iniquity, to lead men from the dark and dangerous paths of sin to peace, to safety, and to heaven.

How great the honor bestowed upon those who love God! How exalted the call that comes to His redeemed children! Each one is appointed an evangel of God's saving mercy. Each one is granted the privilege of engaging in this noble work, and should joyfully accept the high vocation. To man saved by grace comes the Divine word, "Ye are my witnesses." To every disciple is given the command, "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works, and be led to glorify God." To all his followers the Master saith, "Go ye into all the world, and preach My Gospel to every creature." The overturning of the strongholds of sin, the establishment of the Gospel kingdom in the world, the making of the desert to blossom as the rose, and the wilderness and solitary places to be glad, is to be accomplished by human agencies.

II. GOD MAKES CHOICE OF HUMAN INSTRUMENTALITIES OF VARIOUS PERSONAL ENDOWMENTS FOR THE WORK.

When David was accepted by Saul as Israel's champion to meet the Philistine, the king deemed it necessary to array him in his own armor. Possessing the most approved and finest weapons that

could be obtained, he thought that, with these on, David would be more certain of success. But when he had put on the king's helmet, the king's breast-plate, the king's coat of mail, and the king's sword, and had tried them, David immediately laid them aside. Though they were the finest in the kingdom, he sensibly put them off; for he knew that he was not accustomed to their use. He simply took his sling in his hand, the weapon that he had often wielded, and went forth to meet the giant.

The instrumentalities whom God selects for His work possess a diversity of gifts and talents. The lesson here taught is that each one is expected to use his own personal gifts in doing that work, to wield his own peculiar weapon. There are those who imagine that to be successful they must put on Saul's armor. Too many are anxious to work as others do, and if they can not do so they are unwilling to work at all. If they could preach as eloquently as some they have heard, they would willingly become preachers of the Gospel. If they could pray as fervently as some of their associates, they would respond to every call to prayer. If they could teach in the Sabbath-school as successfully as others, they would not decline to become Sunday-school teachers. If they could give as largely as the more wealthy, they would never let a call for benevolence go unheeded. But since they can not do just as others do, they withhold their hands from all work. They are unwilling to assault the giants of evil unless they have on the king's armor. But

the Lord does not want them to wage war with another man's weapons. He does not want them to sing as well, or give as much, or pray as long, or preach as loud as others may do. He simply calls upon them to use the talent which they possess to the best of their ability. To all who obey this call there is promise of a rich reward.

This lesson was deeply impressed upon the heart of a certain preacher in his early ministerial experience, and proved very useful to him in his life-work. On his first circuit, one Sabbath there were two congregations at different points, where service was appointed to be held. He had prepared but one sermon, and proposed to deliver it at each of the appointments. He preached the sermon to his morning congregation. On his way to the afternoon appointment he was greatly surprised to see a good portion of those who attended the morning service on the way to the same place. He became very much worried in his mind. What he should do for a sermon suitable to the surroundings was a question hard to answer. To use the same text and preach the same sermon to the same people and in the same day would not do, especially for a young preacher. He had lately read with much interest a sermon by one of our good bishops. He resolved at last that he would, so far as he could, preach the bishop's sermon to his afternoon congregation. He entered the pulpit. He read the bishop's text, and began the bishop's sermon. But before he had got through with the introduction he wholly lost the

bishop's line of thought, and became exceedingly bewildered. How he got through with that sermon he never could distinctly remember. The lesson imparted, though painful, was useful to him, and permanent,—never to try to fight in Saul's armor. With whatever gifts God has endowed us, with whatever talent we may possess, be that talent of one or ten pounds weight, we should use it in our work for God. With our own weapons of warfare, be they only a staff and a sling, we should with courage meet the Goliaths of sin, and help in obtaining victory for the truth.

III. GOD MAKES CHOICE OF HUMAN INSTRUMENTALITIES THAT ARE PREPARED FOR THE WORK.

David was well prepared for the difficult task he undertook. When a child at my mother's side, listening to the story of David and Goliath, I thought the feat accomplished was beyond human skill and power; that by some supernatural aid David had overcome the giant; that merely with a sling and a stone David could not have defeated his huge enemy. But a more careful examination of the record shows that David was well prepared for such work. He was confident that, using the strength which God had given him, with the stone from the sling, he could slay the Philistine. He knew from practice how to wield the sling effectually. He had become familiar with its use as he had watched his father's flocks on the hills near Bethlehem. His arm was well trained for hurling

the stone. With his sling he had often taken the bird on the wing, the wild beast in the forehead, and the center of the mark on the ledges of rock. Now he had no doubt of his ability to smite the giant before his enemy got near enough to touch him with sword or spear. So when he hurled the stone it went unerringly to the center of Goliath's forehead, and the giant fell unconsciously to the earth.

In the work of saving men, in the difficult task of overcoming evil, in the grand mission of establishing the kingdom of righteousness in the world, God employs agencies that are well prepared. The effective preacher of the Gospel is one who has faithfully studied the Divine truth, and tested by personal experience its saving power. He comes with well-beaten oil to the pulpit. By close investigation having become an expert in Divine things, he brings a living message to those who wait on his ministry. The evangelist who is successful in leading many sinners to Christ is one who is personally acquainted with the life of faith, and who possesses a character for purity and uprightness that is invincible in influence. The defender of the faith is made ready to meet the fallacies of unbelief and the thrusts of skepticism by having devoted earnest study to the Word of God, and by practice knows how to wield the sword of the Spirit. The teacher in the Sunday-school whose class continually grows in numbers and in interest comes to his place fully imbued with the important truths contained in the

lesson. He who offers acceptable prayer in the congregation is one who has learned how to present his petitions to God by often praying in secret and around the family altar. He who gives a clear and joyful testimony to God's saving grace in public is one who has often bowed at the foot of the cross, has spent many moments in self-examination, and held sweet communion with the Holy Comforter. He that aids in the benevolent enterprises of the Church, who contributes to the support of the ministry, and helps in sending the Gospel to heathen lands, is one who has carefully accumulated the funds and consecrated them to God as the days have come and gone. In every department of Christian endeavor God wants men who are prepared for the work to which He calls them. The preparation made will always prove the measure of the success obtained. The skill acquired by constant practice with the sling will always be prophetic of the victory to be won.

IV. HUMAN INSTRUMENTALITIES ARE CHOSEN WHO HAVE FAITH IN GOD AND BELIEF IN SUCCESS.

To the boasting Philistine David replied: "I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel. This day will the Lord deliver thee into mine hand." He trusted in God, and was confident he would prevail. A consciousness of right doing and an expectation of succeeding are helpful to man in temporal avocations. Doubt of success and the disapproval of conscience are the

first indications of failure. A man prospers in business who ever has regard for the principles of right, and believes that he will gain the sought-for ends. There is need of the same principle in order to accomplish spiritual good. In all efforts to overcome evil and to bring the world to a saving knowledge of the truth, God's people have need of confidence in Him and faith in success. This principle enabled Paul, the great apostle, to build up the cause of Christ in every place. Though bitter persecution and severe trials met him wherever he attempted to preach the Gospel, yet his faith in God and in success never failed him. This principle inspired Wesley to declare the truth in the presence of jeering mobs, and effectually to recommend an experimental religion to lifeless Church members. This principle gave courage to our fathers who planted Christianity all over our land. This principle insures efficiency to all who engage in work about the altars of the Church in times of religious revivals. This principle is the motive-power for all in overcoming the giants of evil. It strengthens the arm, it gives unerring aim to the sling and certainty to the flying stone. The words of David are worthy to be inscribed as a motto on the banner of all of God's hosts. To every opposing evil, to every Goliath of sin, we should be ready fearlessly to declare: "I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel. This day will the Lord deliver thee into mine hand." Such faith God wants, such faith is prophetic of triumph.

V. GOD GIVES TO SUCH INSTRUMENTALITIES COMPLETE VICTORY.

The soldiers of Saul stood trembling with fear. A panic had demoralized their every rank. They looked only for defeat at the hands of the Philistines. But when David fearlessly met Goliath and slew him before their eyes, their courage revived. They sprang from their hiding-places; they joined in an exultant shout, and, while the Philistines were stunned and dismayed by the overthrow of their giant leader, the Israelites suddenly charged upon them, routed their forces, and gained a glorious victory. By such instrumentalities the moral and religious triumphs of all ages have been gained. The early disciples of Christ, each armed with his sling and stones gathered from the stream of Gospel truth, met the proud forces of Judaism, and conquered them; encountered the armies of heathenism, and put them to flight; overturned the strongholds of idolatry, and bestowed upon the whole Roman Empire the Christian name. It was the presentation of Gospel truth with such faith by Wesley and his coadjutors that awakened the spiritually dead Church of England, led multitudes to the blessed experience of saving grace, and put in motion the waves of Scriptural holiness that now beat upon every shore. It was the faithful, courageous wielding of their slings, laden with the solid truths of God's Word, by Asbury and our fathers, that Methodist Churches and Methodist Christianity were established all over this land. The battle still goes

on between truth and error. The tocsin of war is heard in every clime. The Goliaths of evil are falling before the Davids of Israel. The hosts of the Lord are advancing in battle array, triumphant in every conflict. Before long the shout of complete victory will go up. Before long the last stronghold of sin will fall before the conquering hosts of Israel. Before long the saving power of the Gospel will thrill the hearts of all nations, and the peoples and tribes of the earth will be given unto the Son for a perpetual possession.

“Soldiers of Christ, arise,
And put your armor on;
Strong in the strength which God supplies
Through His eternal Son;
Strong in the Lord of Hosts,
And in His mighty power,
Who in the strength of Jesus trusts
Is more than conqueror.”

XVIII.

THE LIVING SACRIFICE.

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service."—ROM. XII, 1.

THE Christian religion inspires a spirit of charity and good works. It blesses us, that we may bless others. It gives peace and joy to our hearts, that we may bestow peace and joy upon other hearts. It comes to us with the promise of pardon, with the assurance of adoption, and with the spirit of cleansing, that we may lead others to Him who can lift the burden of guilt from their souls and grant to them the grace of full salvation. It gives us joy and comfort and hope, that we may be instrumental in imparting to others the same fullness of joy, the same hallowed comfort, the same glorious hope. It is to this characteristic of His religion that Jesus refers when he says to His disciples: "Ye are the light of the world. Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." But in order that the Gospel may be a blessing to us and that we may be a blessing to others; in order that

its saving power may be fully experienced and extended, it is necessary that we make a full consecration of ourselves to the service of God. The earnest desire to realize the joys promised by Christ, the holy ambition to be active and successful instrumentalities in extending the kingdom of God, make it important that we give careful heed to the earnest words of the apostle, and "present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God." Our consecration must be full and complete. Unless we perform this reasonable service we will fail to obtain for ourselves the benefits of the Gospel, and will not be endued with the power to lead others to the Fountain of saving mercy.

I. THE DUTY PRESENTED IN THE TEXT: "Present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God."

The apostle in using the term "bodies" evidently refers to the whole man. By this term he means more than man's material form; more than hands and head and feet; more than flesh and blood and bone. He clearly implies the mind and soul as well. The whole man is embraced; all that he is, and all that he has. Paul earnestly urges the consecration of the whole man to the service of God.

1. It is to be a sacrifice. The term sacrifice as used in the Scriptures, primarily means an offering made to God as an atonement for sin; a sacrifice by which propitiation is provided for man. The sin-offerings and burnt-offerings made under the

Mosaic law had in them the idea of a propitiation. But they were only typical of the offering of Himself made by Christ as the atonement for the sins of the world. We are unable to present a sacrifice that is propitiatory in its nature. There is no atoning merit in any offering which we may bring. In this meaning of the term, therefore, we can not present our bodies a sacrifice. And there is no need that we make the attempt to do so. A propitiatory sacrifice of all-sufficient merit has already been provided. Nearly two thousand years ago, on the cross on Calvary Jesus offered Himself in our stead, and with His own blood made an atonement for all mankind. Because of that sacrifice, to-day incense that has merit in it, continually arises in our behalf from the mercy-seat.

The term sacrifice means also a dedication to God, a consecration to Divine use. The apostle in one of his letters says, "But to do good and to communicate forget not, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased." Works performed for the good of others, help bestowed upon the needy, are here called sacrifices. Again, he writes, "By Him, therefore, let us offer the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving to God continually." To render thanksgiving to God, to lift up the voice of praise to Him, are spoken of as sacrifices. The idea presented in such use of the term, as well as in the text, is to give something to God that belongs to us. To present our bodies as a sacrifice is, therefore, the dedication of all we are and all we have to the service of God.

The unrighteous man may be said to make such a sacrifice when he forsakes his sins and turns away from his transgressions in order that he may obtain mercy and find pardon. His sins are his own. His evil thoughts, his unholy passions, his wicked works, are his own property. He may hold fast to them if he so desires. No power outside of himself is able to separate them from him. In taking the first step towards salvation he voluntarily relinquishes them all. The ear of Divine mercy will not listen to the cry of him who still takes delight in sin, who continues to pursue the ways of evil. The kingdom of God is at hand only to him who repents of sin and turns away from unrighteousness. The very idol of his heart, if it be unholy, must be sacrificed to obtain God's favor. The penitent makes a sacrifice when he surrenders himself wholly to God. Man is so constituted that his desires, his affections, his faith, his will, are under his own control. Over these no scepter exercises sway but that which he himself wields. To become a child of God, to obtain pardon, assurance, and cleansing, to be saved, he must surrender all to the Divine will. Not only must there be in his heart sorrow for sin, but also trust in Christ in the place of self-dependence, and entire submission to the will of Christ instead of being guided by his own will. Those only who have made this full and complete surrender realize the power of saving grace; to them only comes the blessed assurance, "Son, thy sins which were many are all forgiven thee; arise, and go in peace."

The believer makes this sacrifice when he readily foregoes personal pleasure, worldly comforts, or temporal gain, if necessary, in order to do God service. If he has made an acceptable offering, his time is consecrated to acts of religious devotion; his talents are employed to aid in extending the kingdom of God; his means are ready to be used in bringing the world to Christ. He has laid all his powers, all his being, all he has, upon God's altar; he has dedicated everything to Divine use. It is only those who make this complete sacrifice that prove successful in retaining the Divine approval and are efficient in advancing in the Divine life.

2. The offering is to be a living sacrifice. The apostle distinctly makes this qualification: "Present your bodies a living sacrifice." What is meant by this requirement—"a living sacrifice?" The answer may be found by turning to the law concerning the sin-offering of the children of Israel. The Hebrew was commanded to bring to the temple for a sacrifice a living animal. Its life was to be taken by the priest beside the altar, and its flesh and blood were to be burned upon the altar. The Jew, in selecting the offering which he would make, might have said: "Disease has stricken a portion of my flock, and some of my lambs have died. I will take one of those dead lambs and present it as my burnt-offering." But when he brings it to the altar it is immediately rejected. The priest commands him to take it away and bring a living animal. The Jew might have asked, "Why must I bring a living ani-

mal? This dead lamb has in it both flesh and blood. If I brought one that was alive, it would have to be slain before the offering could be made. Why does the law require a living animal to be brought?" The priest, no doubt, would have answered: "This lamb is of no value to you. Its carcass you could not make sale of in the market-place. You would not cook it and set it on your table to eat. It is of no value to you, and is therefore of no value in the eye of the law. Take it away, and bring a living lamb, one that has value in it." Hence the offering we bring must be a living sacrifice, one that has some value in it to us. God places the same estimate upon the offering we bring for His service that we place upon it for our use. If it is of no value to us, we will obtain no credit for it as an offering to God. Having no property in it, we would not be giving anything to His service. He measures the credit He gives to us for our offering by the value we place upon it for ourselves, be it great or small. If it be one in which we have a great interest, and out of which we could realize great profit, He accepts of it at that full value, and gives us full credit. To be of some value, to be acceptable to God, it must be a "living sacrifice;" one upon which we place a value; one in which we have a substantial interest.

All the service we render to God should be a sacrifice that has life in it. He takes no delight in forms of worship that have no life in them, in songs that are spiritless, in works that are drudgery.

Those who offer such worship are spiritual drones, broken cisterns, clouds without water, and trees without fruit. Their service is but mockery in the sight of God. The sacrifice of song must be with the spirit and the understanding. The prayer that avails much must come from the heart, and its petitions must rise to the throne of God borne on the wings of strong faith and earnest love. The life that meets with the Divine approval is full of zeal and good works. The service that is acceptable unto God is one of the whole heart, soul, mind, and strength. It is a "living sacrifice."

3. The offering is to be perfect and holy. "Present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God."

The offering we make must not only be that which is our own property and that upon which we place a value, but it must be holy. The apostle impliedly again refers to the law concerning burnt-offerings. That law required the worshiper to bring as his sacrifice a perfect animal, one "without spot or blemish." A lamb that was lame, a sheep that was deformed, or a bullock that was diseased was not acceptable. The stingy old Jew might have said: "This is the day appointed for my burnt-offering. I must select my sacrifice. The wild beasts last night broke into my sheepfold and crippled some of my flock. I will take one of these severely wounded lambs and present it as my burnt-offering. It is so badly crippled by the wild beasts that I fear it may die; or if it lives it will not make

a strong and healthy sheep. I will make of it a burnt-offering." But when he brings it to the altar it is quickly rejected. He may ask: "Why will not this lamb do? It has life in it, and flesh and blood. Why not receive it as my offering?" The priest would answer, pointing to the law, "Your offering must be 'without spot or blemish.'" That law forbids the bringing for a sacrifice of the maimed, the bruised, or the diseased animal. It requires that which is perfect, one of the best of the flock.

Our offerings to God must be sacrifices that are "without spot or blemish," that are "holy," in order that they may be "acceptable." How many are tempted to offer for God's service the maimed lamb, the crippled sheep, the diseased bullock! Time that can not be spent in rounds of pleasure is devoted to the worship of God. Talents that are unprofitable in pursuit of worldly gain are used in religious work. Property that is of doubtful value to the possessor is turned into the treasury of the Lord. The best is kept for personal use and personal profit; that which is inferior in value is appropriated to the purposes of religion. An example from real life illustrates this tendency, too often, in human nature. A nominal Christian, who had large investments in worldly possessions, was approached by an earnest worker in the Church, and a contribution was solicited to aid in the erection of a house of worship. The request was very indifferently received. He was gently but earnestly urged to make the donation. It was very evident to all that the church

building was much needed. It was shown that it would prove a great accommodation to the surrounding community, and that it would doubtless enhance all the property in the neighborhood, his own as well as that of others. The effort to obtain any help appearing to be all in vain, the earnest Church worker turned away. As he was leaving, the man called him back, saying: "I believe I will make you a contribution. There is one of your members who owes me quite a sum. The note is due and he has failed to pay it. I can not collect it by persuasion or by law. You can have it to apply on your Church enterprise." His offering was like the maimed lamb; it was not "without spot or blemish." God does not want that portion of our time wherein nothing else can be done. He does not want the use of such talents as we may possess that are not profitable for other work. He does not want our bad money, our bad debts, or our bad notes. He wants an offering that is perfect, a sacrifice that is holy. He wants the best we have.

The best of our time should be consecrated to His service. They who give to that service only hours that can not be employed in temporal work; they who are found in the house of God or engaged in religious devotion, only when business or pleasure makes no calls upon them; they who allow worldly gain to encroach upon the hours of Divine service, like the stingy old Jew, bring only a maimed lamb, a crippled sheep, or a diseased bullock as a sacrifice to God. The best of our talents should be

used in advancing His cause. Has God given you a voice full of sweetest melody and capable of the grandest strains of music; is that your best talent? Rather than use it merely for commercial profit or for the entertainment of those who crowd the halls of sinful amusements, let it be attuned to the harmonies of sacred song; let it pour forth the glad notes of praise and thanksgiving to God. Has God endowed you with a ready utterance and with an eloquent tongue? Let your words be freighted with the good tidings of the Gospel, and let your lips speak forth with all their fervid eloquence the story of the cross, that the dull ear of the world may be entranced with the glorious news of salvation, that fallen man may be lifted up by the power of Divine truth. Or is your chief talent one for managing successfully business enterprises, for accumulating wealth, for getting gain? God wants that talent to be actively employed in His work. There is need of its exercise in all of the departments of the Church. It is wanted in obtaining means for the building of churches, for support of the heralds of the cross, for clothing and feeding the poor, for the erection of schools and colleges, and for sending the Gospel into all lands. Our best time, our best talents, our best possessions, should be consecrated to God's service. A sacrifice should be made that is "holy," that is perfect, in order that it may be acceptable in God's sight.

And what more appropriate offering can we make than hearts free from sin; hearts washed in

the cleansing blood of Christ; hearts that are holy and perfect in love? "I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service."

II. THE DUTY ENFORCED.

The apostle presents the strongest possible incentives for making the sacrifice. It is true this service will cost us something. There is necessary deep humiliation in the confession of sin, and in the acknowledgment of guilt and condemnation. The paths of sin must be forsaken. The strong bonds of evil habits must be broken. Self-dependence must be renounced. Life-long obligations to religious duty must be accepted. Constant warfare must be waged against the world, the flesh, and the devil. Yet, in view of these and all other requirements of a religious life, this is a reasonable service. The sacrifice necessary is more than compensated by the "mercies of God,"—mercies so abundant, so rich, and so glorious.

We accept the principle as correct among men that favors bestowed call for reciprocal favors; that blessings conferred demand blessings in return. The tender care of the parent for the child during the days of helpfulness and youth makes reasonable a life-long love and reverence in return from the child. The protection of the citizen in his person and his property afforded by the Government should inspire in his heart the spirit of patriotism

and true loyalty. He who has rescued you from great peril and saved you from imminent danger well deserves from you sincere gratitude and friendly help in time of need. This same principle makes the offering of ourselves as a living sacrifice to God a reasonable service.

Who has not been the recipient of Divine mercies? Who can tell the number or measure the magnitude of the mercies He has bestowed upon us? We owe to Him all we are and all we have. He made us, and "in Him we live, and move, and have our being." His bountiful hand has provided us with food and raiment. His watch-care over us has kept us from evil. His finger has caused our every heart-beat. His Spirit has inspired our every breath. He ordained the suns and stars in the heavens to light up our pathways. He sends forth the seasons in their order, and gives the early and the latter rain. He causes the fields to bring forth plentifully, and carpets hill and valley with verdure for our delight. He subjects the wild beasts of the earth to our sway, and provides the wonderful forces of the material world for our use. At His command trees bloom and bear fruit, birds sing, zephyrs blow, suns rise and set for man's good. Day and night, seed-time and harvest, winter and summer, come full of Divine mercies. But, above and beyond all these, God manifests His great love to us in the gift of His own Son as our Savior. He has redeemed us with the precious blood of Christ. He has called us from sin unto righteousness by

His Holy Spirit. He has given us the promise of immortality and eternal life. O, the mercies of God! How rich, how abundant, how full they are! Who can tell their number? Who can measure their lengths and their breadths? Who can fathom their depths or estimate their heights? They are above us and beneath us, and by day and by night they surround us on every hand.

Paul appeals to us to make the sacrifice because of the many and great mercies which God has bestowed upon us. He urges it as a reasonable service. How impressive his appeal! How substantial his reasons! See the old apostle as he presents the earnest exhortation. His locks are growing gray with age. His face is marked by the furrows of advancing years. His form is bent beneath the many burdens he has borne. His voice trembles with deep emotion. Tears start from his eyes as he speaks the words tenderly and impressively, "I beseech you, brethren." And while the mercies of God, like a great panorama, pass before him, pointing to each one, he exclaims, "I beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." How readily should we respond to his most stirring entreaty! While Jesus intercedes in our behalf before the throne of God; while the Holy Spirit broods over us with tenderest wooing; while all heaven awaits with anxious interest, may our hearts make the offering! May we with willing minds lay our all

upon God's altar! May we present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is our reasonable service! Then will the cloud of meritorious incense overshadow that altar; then will the voice of the witnessing Spirit be heard; then will the sanctifying power of Divine grace be experienced; then will our lips be attuned to a new song, and our hearts be made to exult in a glorious hope. In this reasonable service there is pardon and peace and eternal life. Heed the words of the inspired apostle; make the sacrifice.

XIX.

GIDEON'S BAND.

“And when Gideon was come, behold, there was a man that told a dream unto his fellow, and said, Behold, I dreamed a dream, and, lo, a cake of barley bread tumbled into the host of Midian, and came unto a tent, and smote it that it fell, and overturned it, that the tent lay along.”—
JUDGES VII, 13.

THIS was simply a dream of a man of Midian. It was told by one sentinel to another in the night-time. He had seen in his vision a small cake of barley bread tumble into the host of Midian. It came to a tent, and smote it to the ground. His fellow sentinel interpreted the dream for him. “This,” said he, “is nothing else but the sword of Gideon, the son of Joash, a man of Israel; for into his hands hath God delivered Midian and all the host.” The minds of the soldiers of Midian, who had invaded the land of Israel, were disturbed. Although they had come in great numbers, they were fearful of the impending battle, and this dream was a prophecy of their coming defeat.

Gideon, while secretly reconnoitering the lines of the enemy, heard the sentinel tell his dream and

his fellow give its interpretation. He discovered the fear and anxiety that were pervading the camp of the enemy, and was greatly encouraged. He was confident that God was troubling the hearts of the Midianites, and preparing his way for victory. He hastily returned to his tent, and, calling his band into line, said, "Arise, for the Lord hath delivered into your hands the host of Midian."

The Midianites were an old enemy of the children of Israel. They had frequently defeated them in battle, and had grievously oppressed them. Now they had again invaded the land, and their hosts were spread out in the valley like grasshoppers for multitude. The army of Israel that was drawn up to meet the enemy was small; yet in this dream Gideon found assurance of coming victory. Weak and feeble as was his band of soldiers, this was the "cake of barley bread." Numerous and powerful as was the host of Midian, this was the tent that was smitten, "that it fell, and overturned, that it lay along." Gideon read in the simple but strange dream an indication of success. He immediately led forth his band against the enemy, and God gave him a complete triumph.

God teaches the Church by example. His dealings with Israel of old are typical of His dealings with Israel of to-day. The manner in which He enabled His people to subdue their temporal enemies then, illustrates the way in which His people may now overcome their spiritual foes. Great as may be the prevalence of sin and iniquity to-day;

feeble as may seem the instrumentalities for extending the truth, we have encouragement to hope and be undismayed. God can with weak things confound the mighty. As He could cause the "cake of barley bread" to overturn the tent of Midian, He can give His people power to overthrow the hosts of evil and crown with glorious triumph the soldiers of the cross. Using this incident as a type of spiritual things, it invites our thoughts to the present need of the Church and the conditions and means of success in building up the kingdom of Christ.

I. THERE IS NEED OF THE REVIVAL OF PURE GOSPEL RELIGION.

This fact should be forcibly realized by all who profess to be the people of God. Without recognizing this important truth, the conditions and means of spiritual prosperity will not be employed. He who is not conscious of the hold that disease has obtained upon his body will not call for the physician or seek medical aid. A Church asleep in formality and indifferent to its spiritual condition will not put forth effort for a revival. It is only when its members realize their own need of being quickened and the importance of saving others that they will make use of the means of extending the kingdom of God. It is only when they are conscious of the spiritual dearth prevailing in the Church and the great number of souls without that are being ruined by sin, that they will apply to God for help and saving power.

The sad condition of Israel in the time of Gideon convinced him of the need of Divine interposition, that his people might be freed from the Midianites. The Israelites, on account of their forgetfulness of God's commands, had been delivered into the hands of their enemies. The oppression which had come upon them was hard to endure. Their cities and their villages were given over to be plundered. They might sow their fields, but their enemies would reap their harvests. Many of the people were forced to fly from their homes to the mountains for safety, and make the caverns in the rocks their dwelling-places. And now their relentless foe had come again with his hosts to bring upon them greater destruction and more galling servitude. The groans and the cries of the people were heard throughout the land. God had pity upon them and hearkened to their cry. He called upon Gideon to become their leader, and said unto him: "Go in this thy might, and thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites. Have not I sent thee?"

The judgments of God have not fallen upon our country so grievously as they had upon the land of Israel. The armies of enemies have not come to destroy our cities and villages and homes. Temporal prosperity may be on every hand. But, spiritually, how much does our condition resemble that of Israel in the time of Gideon! Who does not see what advance evil is making throughout our land? Who does not witness the ruin that is being wrought

by the forces of error? Every Christian beholds the bold front of iniquity, and has need to fear the destroying influences of its determined hosts. The commands of God are forgotten. His name is profaned; His holy day is disregarded; social impurity is prevalent; the paths of vice and intemperance are frequented; and even among professed followers of Christ there are formality and indifference. There is evidently need of Divine help that the Church may become a power for good, and that men and women may be reclaimed from the paths of sin. It is time for the earnest prayer to ascend from every altar, "O Lord, revive Thy work." There is need of a revival of vital Gospel religion in our land, in our community, in our own hearts.

1. The welfare of our country and the perpetuity of its free institutions call for a spread of Gospel light and truth. One has said that the stability and perpetuity of the Republic depend upon the intelligence of its citizens. Not upon the intelligence alone, we reply, but rather upon the intelligence and piety of its people. Its citizens may be ever so intelligent, may be cultured in mind and skillful in work, but still by their immoralities may provoke God's wrath and incur His just judgments. They may be ever so intelligent, and yet ignore that which is just and right, and thus become oppressive towards their fellows. To insure God's favor upon us as a nation and as communities, righteous laws must be enacted and executed, and His commands must be honored and obeyed. The leaven of Gospel

truth among the people can alone create a proper regard for that which is right and just, and the faithful observance of Christian duty by the people is the only certain assurance of perpetuating national liberty and true loyalty.

2. The interests of the commercial world demand a revival of Scriptural holiness. The security of property largely depends upon a right public conscience. How great are the business interests that each one must intrust to the hands of others! A want of fidelity insures loss. In view of the fallibility of human nature; in view of the powerful allurements to vice; in view of the many temptations to lives of dissipation; in view of the frequent commission of fraud and embezzlement in the land, the business man may well ask, "Whom can I trust?" The only bond of security at all times is the cultivation in every heart of the love of the right and the fear of God. A revival of pure religion guards against wrong doing, gives power to resist temptation, and imparts principles that insure integrity of character. The revival of a religion is needed that will change and purify the heart, and make man upright in life. It is the interest of every business man to aid in the spread of Gospel truth that all may be brought under its elevating and purifying influence. Some only look to the presence of a strong police force as a means of security; but the grace of salvation and Spirit of God working upon every heart will insure more certain protection to person and property than any police regulation

that can be established. The temporal interests of every community are advanced by the revival of pure Gospel religion.

3. The zeal and activity of the agencies of evil make necessary such a revival. The forces of error are continually pressing forward. Powerful inducements to sin are presented on every hand. Wily snares are laid to entrap the unguarded foot. Men in high places, as well as in the lower walks of life, yield to corrupting influences. Young men are led astray. The children find schools of vice on almost every street corner. Sons and daughters are exposed to temptations. Multitudes are voluntarily walking in the road that leads to death and eternal darkness. If we would be saved; if we would have our children saved; if we would have our associates and neighbors saved, we must, like Israel of old, cry to God for help, and obtain that Divine presence and power that alone can overcome the hosts of evil.

4. There is need of a revival of religion that more earnest Christian fellowship may prevail. The especial command that Jesus gave to His disciples was to "love one another." This was to be the ever-present bond that was to characterize His followers. And yet how many there are in each Church organization who are strangers to each other! Members of the same society, professors of the same religion, whose friendships and sympathies for each other should ever be warm and active, live towards each other exclusive and seclusive. There is need of the

magnetic power of the religion of Christ to bind them more closely together. There is need of its inspiring influence upon their hearts, that they may love each other and build each other up in the faith of the Gospel. A deeper interest in the welfare of all the members of God's family, more ardent love for the children of God, a stronger bond of fellowship among the followers of Christ, can only be accomplished by the baptism of the Holy Spirit, by a revival of the work of grace in the heart. Then, with the soul warmed anew by Divine love, may Christians unitedly labor together successfully in the work of the Lord.

II. THIS INCIDENT IN THE HISTORY OF ISRAEL PRESENTS THE MEANS OF SECURING A REVIVAL.

The preparation made and means adopted by Gideon in overcoming the Midianites are typical of the conditions of success in religious efforts. The work of revival is not effected by merely human power. We can not convict sinners. We can not grant pardon to penitents. We can not cleanse the heart and make men new creatures in Christ Jesus. A Paul may plant and an Apollos water, but God must give the increase. "It is not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord." It is the Divine Spirit alone that can apply the word to the hearts of sinners, and cause them to tremble. It is God alone who can forgive sin or sanctify the soul. It is the presence of the unseen Spirit, that Spirit of Divine power, that must impart to the

“cake of barley bread” the mysterious influence which will enable it to destroy the tents of Midian. Had not God been present with Gideon and his band, they would have been unsuccessful. If we go forth in our own strength, if we rely upon human agencies alone, we will utterly fail. The same power that troubled the Midianite hosts must trouble the hearts of sinners to-day. The same Spirit that led Israel on to victory then, must go forth with Israel to-day, that men may be saved. And the same means employed by Gideon to secure that presence and power will prove effectual if employed by the people of God at all times.

1. It is necessary that professed Christians turn away from their unfaithfulness, and consecrate themselves anew to God’s service. The first thing that Gideon did in preparing for the conflict was to put away sin from among the Israelites. The altars of Baal were destroyed. The groves where the worshipers of idols had been accustomed to offer their idolatrous service, were cut down. An altar to the true God was erected, and sacrifices were offered thereon. The sins which had hitherto brought defeat upon Israel were forsaken, and earnest prayer for God’s presence was offered before Gideon made any advance against the enemy. Sincere self-examination and full consecration are necessary on the part of God’s people in order to have a revival of His work to-day. Have the professed followers of Christ become idolatrous in thought or act? Have they been worshipers at the shrines of mam-

mon, of pleasure, or earthly gain? Have they neglected the commands of Israel's God? Every sin must be relinquished; every idol must be cast out. The voice of prayer to God should be heard. His presence and sanctifying power must be obtained. Christians can not be instrumental in leading sinners to the fountain of purity while their own garments are defiled by sin. Members of the Church can not successfully recommend the Gospel to others while their own lives are a denial of its saving power. They can not expect their prayers to be acceptable before God while their hearts are far from Him. The work of revival must begin in the Church. The fires about God's altars that are burning low must be rekindled. His children must take a deeper interest in His work, manifest greater zeal in His service, and exercise stronger faith in His promises.

2. There is necessary the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Gideon realized the importance of clearest evidence of his call to lead Israel against their enemies, and the full assurance that God's presence would go with him. He earnestly sought for this assurance. "He said unto God, If Thou wilt save Israel by my hand, behold, I will put a fleece of wool in the floor; and if the dew be on the fleece only, and it be dry upon all the earth beside, then shall I know that Thou wilt save Israel by my hand. And it was so; for he rose up early on the morrow, and thrust the fleece together, and wringed the dew out of the fleece a bowl full of water." His prayer

had been heard and answered. But he again approaches God and earnestly prays: "Let me prove Thee this once. Let it be dry upon the fleece, and upon all the ground let there be dew. And God did so that night." His prayer having been heard and so fully answered; being assured that he was called to the leadership of Israel, he went forth confident of God's presence with him. If we would see the kingdom of God advanced through our instrumentality, we need the same Divine presence. Would we see others saved, the revival fire must begin in our hearts. We need to be endued with power. We need the falling of the dew of Divine love, the baptism of the Holy Spirit upon our hearts in answer to earnest prayer; then may we with courage enter upon the work to which God calls us. The early disciples of Christ felt this need. Gathered together in one place, with one accord, they awaited the fulfillment of the promise. In that upper chamber they offered earnest prayer. While their hearts were spread out before God, the Holy Spirit was poured upon them, and His glory filled all that room. Then had they courage to preach Christ and Him crucified; then were they prepared to proclaim the Gospel of glad tidings to the gathering multitudes. And while they spoke of Jesus and the resurrection, the Holy Spirit applied the truth to the hearts of men, and three thousand believed and were saved from sin. So we must come to God in earnest prayer. We must spread out our hearts, like Gideon's fleece of

wool, before the mercy-seat. Then the refreshing dews of Divine love will fall upon them; then we shall realize the presence of Jesus with us; and being endued with power may, with faith and courage, work for the salvation of all around us.

3. Undaunted courage is necessary for the prosecution of revival work. Gideon very well knew that fear or cowardice in the ranks of his army would be demoralizing upon his whole band, and would insure defeat. He wanted courageous men to go with him into the battle. He therefore issued the order to the people: "Whosoever is fearful and afraid, let him return and depart early from Mount Gilead. And there returned of the people twenty and two thousand, and there remained ten thousand." In the work of extending the Gospel kingdom men of faith and courage are wanted. Infidelity with scornful words, atheism with brazen effrontery, moralism with fallacious logic, formality with its cold indifference, wickedness unblushing in all manner of evil-doing, are to be met. With these the battle is to be waged, and without that courage inspired by the Divine presence there will be faint-heartedness in the ranks of Israel and sore defeat on the field of conflict. The Christian religion requires brave men as its armor-bearers. Jesus has no use for laggards or cowards in His army. He calls for courageous men to enlist under His banner to overcome the world. He wants daring men like Luther and Calvin; zealous men like Wesley and Whitefield; earnest men like our fathers in the Gospel, to

engage in the war for the truth. With such courage, victory may be won. We can then go to the sinner and tell him that "the wages of sin is death," and earnestly plead with him to turn and live. We can then bow at the side of the penitent, and sing and pray with him, pointing him to the "Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world." We can then tell to all around the story of the cross, and make open confession before the world of our own trust in God. We can then meet the scoffer without shrinking, and encounter the skeptic without fear, and with the shield of faith be able to turn aside every dart that may be hurled against the truth. O, for such courage in every Christian's heart!

4. A spirit of self-sacrifice is necessary for success. Gideon was impressed with this need in his followers. Of the ten thousand who were not "fearful or afraid," and still followed his commands, God showed him that many of them were not ready to make sacrifice for the deliverance of Israel. When he had brought the people down to the stream of water on their way to attack the Midianites, "the Lord said unto Gideon, Every one that lappeth of the water with his tongue, him shalt thou set by himself; likewise every one that boweth on his knees to drink. And the number of them that lapped, putting their hands to their mouth, were three hundred. And the Lord said, By the three hundred will I save you, and deliver the Midianites into thine hand." Those who stopped in

their onward march to bow down upon their knees to drink showed their deeper interest in gratifying their own personal wants than in overcoming the enemy. The three hundred that took the water in their hands and applied it to their thirsty lips as they hastened on to the battle, manifested their readiness to sacrifice everything for the good of Israel. The deliverance of their land from the hosts of Midian was the chief desire of their hearts, and even burning thirst could not abate their patriotic zeal. This same spirit must characterize the efforts of God's people if the powers of darkness are to be overcome and the strongholds of iniquity are to be thrown down. Personal ease is to be sacrificed for the interests of Zion. Personal pleasure must be made subservient to our duties to God's cause. Worldly interests are to be considered of secondary importance when the soldiers of Christ go forth to battle with evil. The success of the truth, the conversion of souls, the salvation of the people, the glory of God should be the great absorbing thought, the theme of conversation, the object of every effort. Possessing this spirit, God's children will find time for secret prayer and family devotions. Possessing this spirit, they will be found at the place appointed for the worship of God and religious duty. Possessing this spirit, they may confidently expect God's saving power to be manifested and the outpouring of Divine grace upon their hearts. Then the house of prayer will be attractive; then the services in God's sanctuary will

be full of interest; then sinners will tremble before the manifest power of God, and the shouts of the saved will be heard throughout all the tents of Israel.

5. Unity of purpose and unity of action are necessary. "As I do, so shall ye do," was the command of Gideon to each one of his three hundred followers. They marched forward under his leadership, each one with a trumpet in one hand and a pitcher inclosing a lamp in the other hand. When they had reached the place for attack, and Gideon blew his trumpet, they all blew their trumpets. When he broke his pitcher, and let the light of his lamp flash out, they all broke their pitchers, and three hundred burning lamps shone out suddenly upon the darkness of the night. And as with one voice their united shouts arose, "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon!" surprise and terror fell upon the encamped hosts of Midian, and panic and flight quickly followed. Let the followers of Christ thus go forth with one purpose and with unity of action, and what power of evil will be able to resist their onward progress? Let all of God's people together labor for the salvation of sinners; let all in unison attack the strongholds of error; let all unite in one voice of prayer and praise; let all carry forward the banner bearing as their motto, "The cross of Christ and the salvation of the world," and their success must be glorious. How grand would be the scene! How sublime would be the results! Evil would be put to flight; the shackles of sin would fall from

humanity, and the kingdom of Christ would be universally established.

III. THE VICTORY WAS COMPLETE.

The triumph gained by Gideon and his band over the Midianites delivered Israel from their power, and put to flight their hosts. The "cake of barley bread" smote the tent of Midian, and completely destroyed it. Startled by the midnight attack, the forces of the enemy became demoralized; their soldiers were panic-stricken; in the darkness of the night they turned their weapons upon each other, and Israel rejoiced in their utter overthrow. With similar success the army of Christ has marched forward from conquering to conquest. Men inspired by the Spirit of truth, soldiers of the cross self-sacrificing for the cause of God, Christians nerved to their work by the courage of their faith, and working in harmony and union with each other, have always been crowned with success. So it was in the days of the apostles and early disciples; so it was with our fathers in the years gone by; so it may be with the Church of to-day and in the future. The work of revival may go forward at every altar and in every Church. God is able to apply His truth to the conviction of sinners. He is waiting to forgive penitents and sanctify believers. Jesus still intercedes in man's behalf. The virtue of His shed blood is sufficient for man's redemption. The Holy Spirit is ready at the door of every soul to apply the grace of cleansing. "Behold, now is the

day of salvation." Why may not our faith now lay hold upon the precious promises? Why may not our hearts now feel the quickening power? Why may not our eyes now see multitudes turning to God? Why may not every altar be crowded with penitents seeking salvation? Why may not every Church be filled with the glory of God? It is possible. It is in the promise, if the conditions are met. Cast away doubt and fear, O child of God! Have good courage, and go forward; and though it be but a "cake of barley bread," it will smite the tents of wickedness and give to Christ the purchase of His blood.

"The world can not withstand
Its ancient Conqueror;
The world must sink beneath His hand
That arms us for the war;
This is the victory,—
Before our faith they fall;
Jesus hath died for you and me;
Believe, and conquer all."

XX.

JESUS KNOCKING AT THE DOOR.

“Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me.”—REV. III, 20.

THESE words form a part of the letter addressed by the risen Savior to the Church of the Laodiceans. They clearly indicate His constant watch-care over that Church. They show that He knew very well its condition, and was deeply interested in its welfare. The Laodiceans had received the Gospel from the apostles. The truth had been preached to them in all of its purity and they had experienced its saving power. But now they had lost their first love. Lukewarmness had taken the place of zeal, and they had fallen into a state of wretchedness and spiritual poverty. Jesus refers to their great indifference in His service, calls upon them to awake from their lukewarm condition, and counsels them to buy of Him gold that they might be rich. He earnestly urges them to repent of their backslidings lest the fearful judgments of God should fall upon them. He assures them that He is ready to help them to a higher spiritual state, and is willing again

to take up His abode with them. "Behold," says He, "I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me."

This letter comes with equal appropriateness to every Church. Has any congregation of the professed followers of Christ declined in spiritual power? has its faith grown weak? has lukewarmness taken the place of zeal in the service of God? are its members backslidden and become spiritually poor? Jesus assures them that He has full knowledge of that fact. He evidently yearns for their recovery; He utters earnest words of warning to arouse them from their lethargy; He calls upon them to repent of their backslidings, to renew their covenant of faith and love, and to go forth with new zeal in the performance of their high vocation. He not only gives them assurance of His great interest in their welfare, but tells them that He is ready to help them to a higher spiritual state. "Behold," He says, "I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me."

These words are addressed to every individual as well as to every Church. Jesus has full knowledge of the loss which man has experienced because of sin, of the wretched state into which he has fallen, of the fearful condemnation which he has incurred, of the deep poverty in which he lives, and of the fearful destiny that awaits him in the

future. In His great love for man He has come to afford him rescue. He calls upon him to consider his perilous condition, to repent of his sins, to turn to God that he may be rich, to accept of the offers of mercy that he may be saved. He comes to the door of every sinful heart and knocks, and "if any man hear My voice," He lovingly says, "and will open the door," He will come in, and bring pardon and peace and hope of life.

I. IN THE WORDS OF THE TEXT, JESUS GIVES ASSURANCE OF HIS EARNEST DESIRE TO SAVE MAN.
"I stand at the door, and knock."

The unbelief of the human heart is ever ready to doubt His word. His presence is denied, and the unwilling ear is closed to His invitations of mercy. "How does Jesus knock at my door?" it inquires. "If I truly heard His voice, then I would open the door and let Him come in. But I neither see His form nor hear His voice." It is the fact that we may not see His form with the natural eye, nor hear His voice with the natural ear, yet He truly stands there knocking. He seeks admission that He may save us.

1. He knocks at the door in the warnings, the provisions, and the promises of the Bible. He speaks to us in His revealed Word. That Word He gives us for our instruction, for our reproof, for our encouragement. In His Word He earnestly and lovingly gives warnings against a life of sinfulness. We may close our ears to the warnings

given, as words that are unpleasant to us; we may be unwilling to listen to the terrors of the law or consider the judgments of God threatened against the guilty; we may say that they disturb our minds, excite our fears, and destroy our peace, that they surely are not the words of one who is a friend; yet these warnings are all uttered by Him who cares for us, and who would shield us from impending danger. They are the words of a true and loving friend. That man who sees the thief trying to break into your house and to steal your money, gives proof of his friendship by telling of your danger. That man who passes by your house at the dead hour of midnight while you are fast asleep, and sees that your house has caught on fire, yet quietly goes on his way, saying, "He is my friend; I will not disturb his slumbers," is no true friend of yours. He is but a cruel enemy. A real friend would quickly arouse you from your sleep by shouting to you that your house was burning over your head. He would faithfully warn you of your danger, that you and your children might escape from the devouring flames. In the warnings of the Bible, Jesus, as a friend, knocks at the door. He sees how sin has kindled the flames in our house, and comes to wake us up from the sleep of sin that we may escape. He shouts to us in His Word that the "wages of sin is death," and that "the soul that sinneth, it shall die." As a true friend, He points out the ruin wrought upon man by sin, and urges him to repent of his evil doings and to forsake his sinful ways.

As a friend, He announces the terrors of the law, and by them would arouse the fears of coming judgments. As a friend, He knocks at our door that He may save us from eternal death.

His voice may be heard in the bountiful provisions of the Gospel made for our salvation. Notwithstanding the deep depravity which sin has wrought in man's nature, and the fearful condemnation which it has brought upon him, there is complete salvation provided. An atoning sacrifice has been offered, a sacrifice possessing Divine virtue, and through it pardon for guilty and sinful man may be obtained. Strong incentives are presented for accepting the offer of mercy. In the deep humiliation of Jesus; in the poverty which He underwent; in the sorrows of Gethsemane; in the blood which flowed from His hands, His feet, and His side on the cross; in His triumphant resurrection from the grave, He stands knocking, pleading that we may open the door and let Him come in.

In the wonderful promises of the Gospel we may hear the voice of that loving Savior. Every assurance to those who come to Him for pardon, every prophecy of the coming of the Holy Comforter, every pledge of grace to sustain in this life, and every promise of a glorious reward in the life to come, is but the voice of Jesus knocking at the door. On every page of the blessed Bible, in every line of revealed truth, there is heard the voice of Jesus knocking at the door, anxious and willing to come in and save.

2. In the convictions wrought by the Holy Spirit upon the heart of man, Jesus knocks at the door. God does not leave man unconscious of guilt and in ignorance of his lost condition. The Holy Spirit applies the truth to his conscience, and causes him to realize that he is guilty and under condemnation. That Spirit is especially sent "to convince the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of a judgment to come." He troubles every heart. He arouses every soul with the fear of eternal death. The convictions wrought by Him are for our good, and should excite our deepest concern. It is dangerous to treat lightly His earnest strivings, and disregard His impressive calls. God has said, "My Spirit shall not always strive with man." It is possible for us to so insult Him in His work upon our hearts as to cause Him to leave us alone in our sins. When a small boy I was deeply moved with the words of a young man who seemed to be in such a sad condition. That dread disease, consumption, had taken fast hold upon his vital organs. His physical strength was wasting away. The hectic flush was on his cheeks, and frequent hemorrhages were consuming his lungs. He was evidently very near the grave, and yet was unsaved. A pious Christian woman, deeply interested in his welfare, kindly asked him why he did not seek religion and give himself to God. "Life," she told him, "was so uncertain. Does not the Holy Spirit," she asked, "impress your heart with the need of salvation? Does He not afford you convictions that such is

your duty?" A rather scornful smile playing upon his pale countenance, he replied: "No, I have no convictions in that direction. I once had such impressions. When the Church in our town was engaged in a great revival, when many of my associates and young friends were leaving my side and becoming Christians, I then felt that I, too, should go. The Spirit of truth powerfully convicted me. I was unwilling to yield. I sought every possible means to rid my mind of those convictions. At last I went out all alone, and madly cursed that Spirit, until my convictions were deadened and I was wholly relieved of the trouble they caused. Since that hour I have had no desire or inclination to become a Christian." A few days after that conversation, in a severe paroxysm of coughing, while leaning his head upon his sister's bosom, he breathed his last. He seemed to have been forsaken in his sinful condition, and passed away without hope. Is the Holy Spirit now striving with your spirit? Is Jesus in those convictions now knocking at your door? Hasten to heed His voice, and open the door. "Quench not the Holy Spirit."

3. In His providential dealings with man He is knocking at his door. It is true many of the providences of God are mysterious, and we can not explain or understand them. But some of them are evidently designed to influence us to love and serve Him. Why is it that you have been permitted to hear another sermon and attend another service in the house of God? Is it not that you may have

another opportunity to seek salvation? Why is it that your life has been mercifully spared while so many others have been cut down by death? Is it not that you may once more hear the voice of Jesus knocking at the door? Why is it that your worldly plans have been frustrated, your body touched by disease, or your friends removed from you? Why is it that, by day and by night, you have been led on a way that you knew not, and through scenes to which you were a stranger? Is it not that you might be brought to see the beauty there is in a Christian life, and be constrained to listen to the voice of Him who is knocking at the door? Every means possible seems to be employed by Providence to awaken man's conscience to a sense of guilt, and lead him to accept of saving mercy. Even the angel of death may sometimes be permitted to visit our homes to lead us to think of eternity, and influence us to enter the service of God. It is said that a certain man, who had an abundance of worldly goods, being wholly engrossed with things of this life, became skeptical and entirely indifferent to religious matters. The one child that he had was the idol of his heart. Though often urged to become a Christian, he constantly refused and scarcely gave it a passing thought. One day his child took sick, and soon died. The stroke fell heavily upon his heart, and he deeply mourned on account of his sad bereavement. One night, while the shadows of grief hung about him, in his disturbed slumbers, he had a dream. He saw, in that

night vision, a shepherd who was trying hard to tole his flock of sheep from a bare and scanty field into a green and luxuriant meadowland. The shepherd often got his flock near to the gateway, and then they would turn and flee back. After making many unsuccessful efforts, the shepherd at last caught up into his arms a little lamb, and, carrying it through the gate, gently set it down in the green pasture. Soon its dam and all the sheep followed. This man awoke from his sleep, but could not forget the vision of the night. It was true that it was only a dream, but that dream was so impressive. That lamb brought afresh to his mind his own sad loss. The Great Shepherd had often tried to lead him through the gateway of salvation, but he had constantly refused to go. Now the lamb from his own little flock had been borne in loving arms, it seemed, into the Paradise of God, that he might be influenced to seek a home in the same beautiful land. Jesus stands at the door day and night, in sunshine and in storms, knocking, and He calls to all, both young and old, both rich and poor, to open the door and let Him come in. He wants to save us.

II. MAN'S SALVATION CONDITIONAL: "If any man hear My voice, and open the door."

The acceptance of salvation is not compulsory. God does not save any one against his will. It is a matter of each one's free choice. A Savior is provided. Saving grace is freely offered. The strong-

est incentives possible for its acceptance are presented. Jesus even comes to the door and knocks, but He does not force an entrance. Man's will alone can turn the key and unbolt the door. He must voluntarily accept of the salvation provided. It is wisely adapted to his necessities, and possesses power sufficient for the work. But upon man rests the responsibility for the exercise of that power." "If any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in."

It is for us to lend a willing ear to His voice, and open the door for His entrance. The great piles of rubbish made by sin are to be removed. Evil thoughts and unholy desires are to be cast out of the heart; the passions of anger and hatred are to be subdued; unbelief and the spirit of rebellion are to be banished; unholy ambition and worldly lusts are to be trodden down; the way must be prepared for the coming of the Lord, that He may impart purity and permanent joy. "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon."

Man must open the door. This implies faith in Christ. You do not open the door of your house to one of whom you are suspicious, but to him in whom you confide. It is to accept of Christ as our only Savior; it is to receive Him as One who has loved us and given Himself for us; it is to believe in Him as one who is able to save us unto the utter-

most. Those who to-day are happy in God's forgiving grace; those who rejoice in the life-giving power of the Gospel; those whose hopes, as anchors, are cast within the veil, are they who, when in wretchedness on account of sin, heard the voice of Jesus knocking, and willingly opened the door, and gladly bade Him come in. Those who have triumphantly passed through earth's conflicts and gained an abundant entrance into the kingdom of God, are they who, in this life, hearkened to the voice of Jesus knocking at the door; here gladly bade Him come in; here washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb; and now, crowned with immortality and eternal life, stand at His right hand.

Is sin oppressive? Is guilt a heavy burden? Is impurity the cause of deepest sorrow? Would you be made entirely free from its bonds? Would you have light in your house and joy in your heart? Hearken to the voice of that loving Savior; open the door and He will come in. Long has He been standing there, patiently knocking. O, now turn the key; now open the door; now, without a moment's delay, receive Him by faith and be saved!

III. BLESSINGS ARE PROMISED TO ALL WHO OPEN THE DOOR: "I will sup with him, and he with Me."

In the simple figure of the text there is promise of the richest of rewards to those who accept of Christ. No stronger motive, no more stirring in-

centive could be presented. He whom we have so often slighted, whom we have so frequently rejected, and whom we have so wickedly crucified, comes to us on a mission of love, and promises to abide with us as a friend.

I. He assures us of a rich reward in this life: "I will sup with him." In these words is promise of His presence and help in all the trials through which we are called to pass. He will sup with us whatever may be our surroundings. We may well inquire, How can we spread a table worthy of such a guest? When some dear friend sends you word that he is coming to dine with you, you joyfully look forward to the day of His promised visit. You prepare a plenteous feast to spread upon the table, a feast that will attest your love and friendship for him. If the governor of your commonwealth or the President of your country were to send word that on a certain day he would see you at your home, and sup with you at your table, how greatly would you appreciate such honor! The market-places would be visited to secure the best of food that they could afford; experienced hands would be employed to prepare the meal and spread the board; the richest of viands would be placed upon the table in order that you might properly honor such an exalted guest.

But He who here promises to come and sup with us is more loving than any earthly friend; more noble than governor, or prince, or President. It is He who loved us and gave Himself for us. It

is He who was with the Father before the worlds began. It is He who is King of kings and Lord of lords. It is He who made the worlds, and whose scepter sways the universe. He promises to come in and sup with us. How shall we make preparation for such a presence? We are too poor and unworthy to spread a board for such an exalted guest. We may only have a crust of bread and a cup of water to place upon our table, yet He will sup with us. Our meal may be spread in the home of poverty and the chamber of want, yet He will sup with us. Our portion may be to drink from the cup of sorrow, to be buffeted by the onsets of temptation, to be bowed down with the burdens of duty, to painfully endure the pangs of disease and shed the tears of sad separations, yet He promises to sup with us. Of all of these trials He will bear a part. He will impart comfort in times of sorrow; He will give courage when we meet with temptation; He will afford help in performance of duty; He will inspire hope in the hour of separation; He will take part of our troubles upon His own heart, and give us grace to bear the remainder. Let the feast be one of riches or poverty, one of joy or grief, one of gladness or sorrow, He will sup with us. O, if Jesus will sup with us in all of life's trials, how gladly should we open the door and joyfully bid Him come in!

2. He gives promise of blessings in the life to come: "And he shall sup with Me."

The feasts of which we may partake will not al-

ways be prepared from what the poor markets of earth afford. Jesus, Himself, will spread the table in the heavenly mansion, and there we shall sup with Him. It will not be with Him a poor man and acquainted with grief, but with Him endowed with all the wealth that creation affords. It will not be with Him bowed down by the sorrows of Gethsemane, or crying in agony upon the cross on Calvary, but with Him having conquered death and risen from the grave. It will not be with Him as the persecuted Man of Nazareth, the Wayfarer who had not where to lay His head, or the One condemned before Pilate's judgment seat; but with Him the highly exalted Redeemer of the world, the Divine Son of God. We shall sup with Him; we shall drink from the stream of living waters which His rod shall cause to flow from beneath the throne of God. We shall eat of the fruit that He shall pluck from the trees that grow along the river of life. We shall sup with Him amid the chorus of angels and the songs of the redeemed. There, in mansions prepared for those who love Him; there, with the saints of all ages, with the redeemed from every clime, arrayed in white, we shall sit down at the festive board, and sup with Him forever.

Jesus stands at the door of every Church, knocking. Has lukewarmness paralyzed its members in their devotions? Have divisions and dissensions destroyed its spirit of brotherhood? Has spiritual dearth withered its hopes of prosperity? Open the door; let Jesus come in. His presence will give new

life to its services; His love, shed abroad in every heart, will form a sure bond of earnest fellowship, and the baptism of the Holy Spirit will crown with success and prosperity its every work.

Jesus stands at the door of every professed Christian's heart, knocking. Has your service of God lost its spirit and power? Has your zeal become languid? Has your faith grown weak? Open the door, and He will come in, and His presence will make worship again delightful, will revive your zeal, and give your faith a stronger hold upon the promises of God.

Jesus stands at the door of every sinner's heart, knocking, and asking for admission. Though guilt and sin have made it "weary and heavy-laden;" though evil has blighted with impurity its every power; though fearful clouds overhang its future, hearken to His voice; open the door, and He will come in. And at His coming He will speak words of full pardon; He will cleanse the soul from the stains of sin, and roll back from the future the dark clouds of condemnation. Be it the cry of every heart,

"Come in, come in, Thou Heavenly Guest,
Nor hence again remove;
But sup with us, and let the feast
Be everlasting love."

XXI.

THE GOSPEL MIRROR.

“But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.”—2 COR. III, 18.

THE apostle speaks of the greater excellency of the Gospel revelation. He draws a comparison between the Mosaic and the Christian dispensations. He represents both as Divine, that both of them reveal Divine truth, that both of them aid in unfolding the plan of man's salvation; but the Christian dispensation is clearer, fuller, and of greater glory.

The dispensation of Moses was one of types and shadows; that by Christ is one of truth and simplicity. The sacrifices offered under the Mosaic dispensation, taken from the flocks and herds, were only of value as types of a greater sin-offering; in the Christian dispensation is provided the Lamb of God, a sacrifice full of merit and full of power, the great antitype of all the Jewish offerings, as the propitiation for the sins of the world. When Moses had received the law from the hands of God, and descended from Mount Sinai, his face shone so

brightly that he had to cover it with a veil when he spoke to the trembling people; but under the Christian dispensation we may with uncovered face approach the Great Teacher, and without fear receive His wonderful message. The types have been fulfilled; the shadows have given place to the substance; the thunders of cloud-capped Sinai have been hushed in the loving words from Calvary; the veil is no longer necessary to hide from our eyes the splendors of Divinity, but "we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."

The Gospel is compared to a glass, or piece of metal so finely polished that it reflects the object before it with the greatest brilliancy. This mirror, glowing with the light of the Divine presence, is held up before the world, and all with open face may come and look upon the glory there revealed.

I. THE GOSPEL IS A REVELATION OF DIVINE GLORY.

1. While Jesus was a perfect man, in Him was manifested the Godhead bodily. We are unable to separate the light of the sun from the sun itself. It is of the same nature, the same brilliancy, the same power. Jesus is the Glory of the Lord. He is "the Brightness of God's glory, and the express Image of His person, and upholdeth all things by the word of His power." He is of the same nature, possesses the same attributes, and is the very likeness of the Father. He is verily the Son of God.

The words of Jesus give proof of His Divinity. He taught as one with authority, and not as man teacheth. He spake as never man spake. He made known the Father's love as none but He who was with the Father could reveal it. He brought to the knowledge of men truths that lay beyond the ken of human reason or human philosophy. He uttered words that attest His Divine Sonship.

His works demonstrate the fact that He is "the Glory of the Lord." By His command the water was turned into wine at the feast. By the touch of His finger the deaf were made to hear and the dumb to speak. By His power the blind man at the roadside was restored to sight. By His word the storm-tossed sea ceased its raging and grew calm. The tones of His voice fell upon the leaden ear of the dead, and they were brought to life. By His strong arm He conquered man's last enemy, unlocked the tomb, and brought the resurrection to light. In glorious majesty He ascended up on high, escorted by the angels of God, to become man's Advocate with the Father. By His words and His works He justly merits the title "Wonderful, Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace."

2. The glory of the Lord revealed in the Gospel is Divine mercy. Many duties of a practical nature are laid down in the Bible; many warnings against a sinful life are uttered; many incentives are given for performing works of righteousness; many important truths are brought to light; but the great

central theme of Divine revelation is the love of God in the gift of His Son as man's Savior. To this great truth all practical precepts point, and from it, as a fountain, all promises flow in a deep and widening stream. Jesus, the Christ, the Savior of men, is the keystone in the Gospel arch. Indeed, this truth is the thread of light and love that runs through all revelation. It was the theme on which the patriarchs meditated; it filled the choruses of Israel's songsters; it gave luster to the visions of the prophets; and, as well, formed the guiding star to evangelists and apostles. The whole Bible is but the unfolding of God's plan of saving the world by the gift of His Son; it is everywhere radiant with the light shed forth by the Star of Bethlehem. The Gospel is a revelation of God's mercy and saving grace. This is implied in the text: "We all, with open face beholding the glory of the Lord." Man could not look upon any other manifestation of the Divine Being without trembling and fear. He has become guilty because of sin. He is justly under condemnation. He is naturally impure and unholy. How can he, in such a state, approach face to face the Omniscient, the Almighty One? God's attribute of holiness would drive a creature so impure away from His presence. By His omniscience He knows full well man's guilt and proneness to evil. His justice would demand that merited punishment for iniquity be strictly inflicted. His omnipotent hand could hurl the thunderbolts of wrath upon the condemned. How could man come before the Al-

mighty if no attribute of mercy was made known? Man's own conscience would condemn him; man's impure thoughts and desires would compel him to hide his face in shame. He dare not approach God unless he reveals himself in mercy. Man's only hope is in Divine compassion. The "glory of the Lord" in the Gospel glass, which man may behold with open face, is a revelation of Divine mercy; that mercy that forgives; that mercy that cleanses; that mercy that gives confidence and joy.

Again, the Gospel is the only revelation given to man of God as willing to forgive sin. There only do we behold this "glory of the Lord." You may ask what need have we of the Gospel? Does not God reveal Himself to man outside of the Gospel? Do not "the heavens declare the glory of God," and the firmament tell of His wonderful works? What need have we, then, of the Gospel, if His character and attributes are made known by His works? This question is fully answered by the fact that nowhere else is there a revelation of God's pardoning love and saving mercy. His other attributes are all clearly demonstrated by His works, but nowhere in all the material universe is there any intimation of pardon for the sinner or provision of mercy to take away guilt. You may be deeply conscious of your sins, and tremble with fear on account of condemnation. You may be overwhelmed with terror by your hopeless condition, but where can you go for help? You may search diligently through all the realms of nature, but you will find

no revelation of mercy or promise of pardon there. You may, with the geologist, dig down deep into the earth; you may examine every stratum of its rocky crust, and wander through the wonderful chambers of earth's caverns; you will find at every step you take evidence of the wisdom of Him who laid the foundations of the world, evidence of His presence who holds in their places the battlements of granite, evidence of His power whose hand builded the mountains; yet you will find everywhere, stamped upon every rock, a law, and every law has a penalty, and for every violation of law there is a strict execution of the penalty. You will have to be careful not to jostle the stone from its niche in the wall; for if it falls upon your head, you will certainly suffer from it. You may walk with the botanist at spring's balmy morning through gardens of flowers or over fields of vegetation. You will see design in every vegetable growth; you will discover skill displayed in painting every opening bud; you will find watch-care evident all around in the sending of sunshine and showers; you may wonder at the variety, admire the beauty, and breathe the fragrance of the full-blown flowers—all evidence of the handiwork of God—but nowhere is there an intimation of mercy for the guilty. Everywhere there is law; every law has a penalty, and whenever the law is violated the penalty is enforced. He that plucks the fresh-blown rose must be on his guard or the thorn upon the rose-bush will pierce his hand. You may look through the telescope of

the astronomer at the heavens above; you may count the stars, determine their orbits, and measure their distances; you may wonder at the many dazzling suns and blazing planets; everywhere in the heavens you will see proof of God's power and presence and wisdom, but nowhere a suggestion of Divine mercy. Every heavenly body is girt about by law, and to every law is attached a penalty, and the penalty of every broken law is inflicted without compassion. There is no promise of pardon for the guilty found in the heavens above or in the earth beneath. The voice of mercy is not heard on the mountain top or in the valley deep. Pardon for sin is unknown in all the discoveries of science. What can guilty man do? Where can he go to escape the sword of justice and the cloud of condemnation? Must he sink down, with all his sins upon him, in utter despair? An answer comes only from the Gospel of Christ. Help has been found. The angels have announced the good news to man. A new rose has bloomed on the plains of Sharon; a new star has arisen over Bethlehem; a new revelation has been made on the cross. A tender, loving voice speaks from Gethsemane and from Calvary, saying to every one oppressed by guilt, "Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest." Jesus has made an atonement for man, and now God may be just and yet forgive the sinner. Mercy is revealed, and man may be saved. In the Gospel mirror shines in fullest brilliancy the glory of Divine love for a lost and ruined world.

II. THE GRACIOUS RESULT OF "BEHOLDING WITH OPEN FACE THE GLORY OF THE LORD." We "are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."

"Beholding" means more than a passing notice or careless look. It implies steadfast gaze, intense interest, earnest study; "with open face" means confidence, trust, without fear. The seeker of salvation, "beholding with open face the glory of the Lord," is one who has given up sin, who feels the need of help, and exercises faith in Jesus the Christ as his personal Savior. While thus trusting in God, he experiences in his heart the blessed work of saving grace.

1. The Spirit of God is the effective agency in making the change; "even as by the Spirit of God." Association with the good may cause the wicked to see something of the beauty there is in works of righteousness, and lead them to forsake some of their evil ways; but it will not make anew their nature. Meditating upon things pure and holy may impress the mind with the deformity of sinfulness, and create admiration for that which is right; but it will not change the heart. Even the study of God's Word will not cleanse the soul from sin. It will point out the way to the pool where the blind may receive his sight; it will direct the leprous to Him who can completely heal; it will tell of that power that can break the bonds of sin and set man's heart free; it will reveal Him who can raise the dead to life; but it does not regenerate and sanctify

man's moral being. Nor can man change his own nature, either by processes of reasoning or by mental culture, no more than the African can change his color or the leopard his spots. To be made a new creature, there is need of the presence of Creative Power. It is our duty to look upon "the glory of the Lord" in the Gospel glass; but the act of beholding does not effect the change. That is the work of the Spirit of the Lord. When man accepts of Christ as his atoning Savior, the Spirit bears witness that his sin is forgiven; that his transgressions are blotted out; that God is reconciled. When the light of Divine grace is shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Spirit, man's moral nature is changed. The spirit of rebellion against God is subdued, enmity to that which is pure and good is destroyed, and new desires and new affections spring up. In the heart where the spirit of rebellion existed is now found loving loyalty to God; in the heart that was swept by storms of evil passions is now found peace flowing like a river. In the heart where brooded the raven wings of despair are now found hope and joy and life. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature."

Standing at a great distance from the canvas on which the artist has wrought his finest painting, while glancing carelessly towards it, the whole picture will seem but a confused mass of colors. But come nearer to the canvas, examine the work of the artist more closely, and it will excite your wonder and admiration. It will display skill and taste;

the very spirit of the painter will seem to be alive in all the outlines of the painting; thought and expression will clothe every figure, and the whole canvas will seem to glow with real life. So if you stand far away from the Gospel mirror, and view with indifference the tragic scenes of Calvary there presented, all will appear a meaningless show. But draw near with increasing interest; behold by faith "the glory of the Lord" as it shines forth in the life and death of Christ; then the whole scene is lit up with Divine love, and the Holy Comforter, commissioned by the dying Savior, applies to the heart the grace of pardon and the joys of a full salvation. In the ecstasy of that glad hour you will be able to sing:

"The Spirit answers to the blood,
And tells me I am born of God."

2. The likeness of Christ is imparted to the soul: "Changed into the same image." Every expression of the countenance, every feature of the face before the camera as the light falls upon it, is transferred to the plate on which the picture is formed. So it is with the Gospel glass. When the light of "the glory of the Lord" falls upon the believing soul, the express image of the blessed Savior is stamped upon it by the operations of the Holy Spirit. "Changed into the same image!" How wonderful, how glorious the change! The heart that was oppressed by guilt and under condemnation is "justified by faith, and has peace with God." The soul

that was impure and stained by sin is made clean and holy. He who had been the slave of unrighteousness and a willing captive to evil, has every fetter broken, and is set free indeed. "Changed into the same image," arrayed in like glorious apparel, fashioned after the similitude of the Son of God! Poor, sinful, wretched, man transformed and made like unto the blessed Christ! Wonderful change! Beyond the expectations of the human heart, beyond the thought of angelic mind! To realize such a change, to experience such transforming power, to bear such an image upon our souls, should form the strongest incentive to our hearts, ever to stand before the Gospel glass, "beholding with open face the glory of the Lord."

3. The joys of salvation are always increasing; the change into the same image is "from glory to glory." "The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." Every step taken in the Divine life is "from glory to glory." The first announcement of the advent of Christ was made by angelic hosts as they shouted, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men!" When a soul is saved, his first experience of pardon for sin and adoption into the family of God is one of glory. The showers of blessings that fall all along the Christian's pathway, making him rich in faith and hope and love, are showers of glory. Triumph over temptation, grace to sustain in hours of trial, and victory over death increase his glory. An abundant

entrance into the promised land, the greetings of loved ones on the other shore, basking in the sunlight of heavenly bliss, joining the ranks of the blood-washed throng, and wearing the crown of eternal life, will only be advancing from glory to glory. Every round in the ladder that reacheth into the heavens is a round of glory. Every step taken by the saint of God, every joy experienced, every reward bestowed, is forever from glory to glory.

Come, then, to this Gospel glass; turn from earth's vain promises and disappointments; brush away the griefs and sorrows of time; lay every burden at the foot of the cross, and with joyful experience unite in the exultation of the apostle: "We all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory."



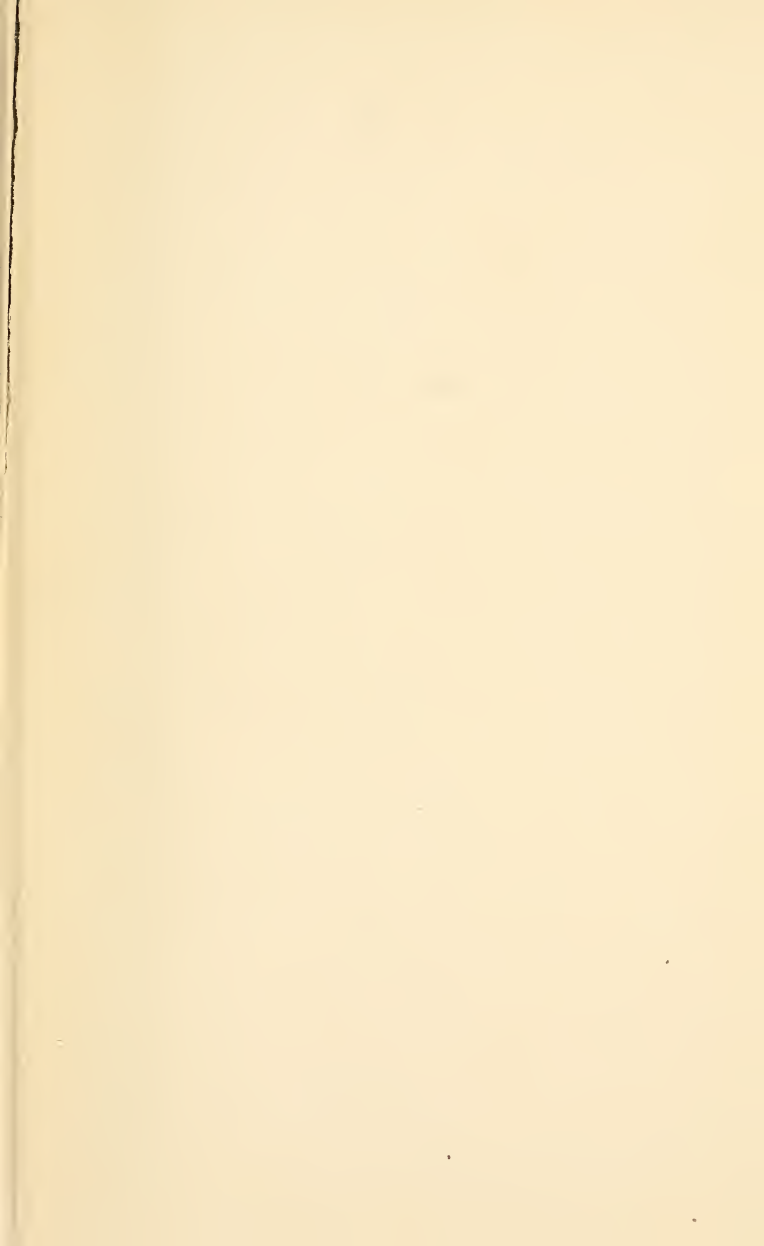
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